

Joe Bustillos  
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## Women and MTV: Who's In Control Here?

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. BABER - Feministic Control. Berlin Wall and Feminist control of the media statement.
- B. FALUDI - Anti-Feminist Control. The story of how "Diversions" became "Fatal Attractions."

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#### A. THE RESEARCH

- 1. VINCENT/DAVIS/BORUSZKOWSKI: SEXISM ON MTV - PART ONE, SUMMER 1985

##### a. THE SCALE

- 1) Level I: Condensing
- 2) Level II: Keep Her Place
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- b. THE FINDINGS. Over half of the videos of the Level I variety, the other three levels comprising the remain half (about 15 percent each).

- 2. VINCENT: SEXISM ON MTV - PART TWO, WINTER 1986-87

- a. THE FINDINGS. No change from previous survey except increase use of implicit/explicit nudity.

- b. 1986-87 CONCLUSIONS. Vincent concerned of socializing effects of videos on young audience and the rock video industry's apparent lack of concern.

- B. THE REASONS: THE MARKET. Rock video industry, as with other entertainment oriented industries, is not driven by ideology but by sales.

- ### III. CONCLUSION: MEDIA REFLECTION. Media tends to reflect the public's general feelings---giving 'em what they want---a disagreement with the media reflection is really a disagreement with the world it mimics.

*Issue not clear, Joe.  
The video represented a lot of  
work, but didn't do what video  
is supposed to do - illustrate  
the point being made (e.g. story).  
The sound was forgotten for attention  
while video. Same way  
good info got "smothered".*

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Right (PMRC, etc.) and feminist concerns. Again, images tend to reflect the beliefs of those watching.

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Vincent, Richard, Dennis K. Davis and Lilly Anne Boruszkowski. "Sexism on MTV: The Portrayal of Women in Rock Videos." Journalism Quarterly, Winter 1987, vol. 64, pp. 750-755, 941. Research on sexual role in music videos---women still objects in over fifty percent of them.

Vincent, Richard. "Clio's Consciousness Raised? Portrayal Of Women in Rock Videos, Re-examined." Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1989, vol. 66, pp. 155-160. Eighteen months after the first survey little has changed, except the women are wearing less clothing.

## Women and MTV

### 1. INTRODUCTION

berlin wall

#### 1A. BABER - Feministic Control

60 seconds

In his December column Playboy writer Asa Baber drew a comparison between an alleged feminist control of the print and television media and the communist thought-control of Post-World War II East Berlin.

Baber writes, "Book publishing and television programming have become prime examples of contemporary thought control. They are sexist (antimale) in the extreme, and they guard their territory well. There is no equivalent literature or programming to match the feminist expressions of the past 25 years. This is not because men are not writing and thinking. It is because the agents and editors and power brokers who staff those industries are almost exclusively feminist, and they want no arguments, no male perspective, no contradictions. There is no shelf space for writing that questions the excesses of feminism. There are no TV programs of that nature, either. What we get in this culture is feminist propaganda, day in, day out."

#### 1B. FALUDI - Anti-Feminist Control

Fatal  
Attractions  
non-action  
clips  
intro,  
30 seconds

Those who oppose Baber's picture of the media might rally behind the story of how a little 45-minute film about human responsibility called "Diversions" became the anti-feminist slasher "Fatal Attractions."

Staff writer for "West" magazine Susan Faludi, in an article called "Fatal Distortion," casts an image of the media that is quite different from the one presented by Baber.

According to Faludi, a young British screenwriter named James Dearden came up with the storyline for "Diversions" one weekend while his wife was away.



"I was sitting in my room being a good boy," Dearden recalled, "and I thought to myself, What if I picked up that little black address book and rang that girl who gave me her number at a party six months ago?"

living  
room/office  
scene  
25 seconds

The end result of that idle thought was not an affair but the simple tale that became the short film, "Diversions." The storyline is relatively similar to "Fatal Attractions."

While his wife is away for the weekend a man calls a woman. They go to dinner and then to bed. He thinks that that is the end of it. But the next day she calls and he goes over to see her. Sunday evening she goes nuts, threatens suicide by slashing her wrists and he stays the second night. Early the next morning he goes home, his wife returns and the phone rings. It's the woman. He tells her off and hangs up. The phone rings again and the wife picks it up. She says hello and then the screen goes blank.

brief story  
cuts  
35 seconds

According to Faludi the first thing the studios did to Dearden's screenplay was to make the man more sympathetic and the girl more aggressive. So out went the little black book scene and in came the scene where the woman suggested that they do it in the elevator.

contrast: man  
in  
library/woman  
insane  
15 seconds

Dearden said, "My short film was a moral tale about a man who transgresses and pays the penalty. But it was felt, and it was a feeling I didn't particularly agree with, that audiences would not be sympathetic to such a man because he was an adulterer."

violence  
30 seconds

But instead of just softening up the male role, Faludi writes that they made the man into the victim and the woman into the sexual terrorist.

Surely this would not have been the case if feminists were in control of the media as Baber contends.

## 2. THE MUSIC TELEVISION MARKET

MTV logos  
42 seconds

If there is a shift in how women are treated by the media and their alleged control of the media it is reasonable to propose that such a shift or control would be most prominent in newer media forums.

One of the most recent media forums to gain wide acceptance is the music video. Music videos have been around since the late '60s when the Beatles released "Strawberry Fields Forever" as what was then called a "Movie Single." But the media impact was not felt until 1981 when Warner Communications and American Express Company put up \$20 million dollars to begin MTV.

If there are feminist commandos in the media ready to brainwash the leaders of tomorrow, then there is no better place to look for them than on MTV.

### 2A. THE RESEARCH

Random videos  
60 seconds

#### 2A1. VINCENT/DAVIS/BORUSZKOWSKI: SEXISM ON MTV - PART ONE

In the Summer of 1985 30 hours of late night and daytime MTV programming was culled for analysis. The sample included 300 videos. Videos were eliminated if they were live performance types without a story line, when there were subsequent appearances in the sample, or when they lacked a female character. One hundred and ten video remained for analysis, which is about the number of videos found on a given week's MTV playlist.

Two males and two females subjected themselves to coding the videos based on a scale of sexism first described by Butler-Paisley and Paisley-Butler and refined by Pingree. The scale was originally meant to analyze the "slice of life" vignettes of print advertising. The scale is broken down to four categories or levels:  
"Condescending," "Keep Her Place,"  
"Contradictory," and "Fully Equal."

## 2A1A. THE SCALE

Level I: Condescending - The woman is portrayed as being less than a person, a two-dimensional image. Includes the dumb blond, the sex object and the whimpering victim. This level of portrayal can include an aggressive, sexual role. Examples: Here women are used as sexual objects, or are presented in roles where others do her thinking.

heavy metal  
23 seconds

Level II: Keep Her Place - Some strengths, skills and capacities of women are acknowledged, but tradition also dictates "womanly" roles. The tradition also dictates emphasis on subservience in romantic or secondary relationships. A high emphasis on sexual attributes still is found here.

traditional  
23 seconds

Level III: Contradictory - Emphasizes a dual role where a woman plays a traditional, subservient role while also displaying a certain degree of independence. This character's independence is gained at the expense of her subservience. Anything she does outside of domesticity and nurturance is viewed as "something extra" (women have secondary interests but the domesticity/nurturance dimension is of foremost importance). Example: A woman with certain skills is placed in a situation where she teaches a man something but then backs off before she embarrasses him.

"Woman in  
Chains"

Level IV: Fully Equal - Treated as a person (possibly a professional) with no mention of her private life. Does not remind us that domesticity and nurturance are non-negotiablely the woman's work as well. Women are viewed nonstereotypically.

## 2A1B. THE FINDINGS

56.9 percent of the videos sampled were of the level one sexist variety. 17.1 percent were traditional values, 12.2 percent were contradictory values, and 13.8 percent were of the fully equal/egalitarian values. The researchers found that there was no significant difference in the percentages when the videos were split between those bands with all male performers and those bands with women and men.

## 2A2. SEXISM ON MTV - PART TWO

Eighteen months later Richard Vincent, one of the writers of the previous research, went back out to see if the figures had changed since the last survey.

With an additional twenty hours of programming and 270 videos taken during the winter of 1986-1987, 122 met the criterion of the first sample from the Summer of 1985. Combining the two samples together they ran the same analysis on the new total of 232 videos. They used the same four categories or levels: "Condescending," "Keep Her Place," "Contradictory," and "Fully Equal."

## 2A2A. THE FINDINGS

Taken as a group there was no significant difference found in any of the four categories or levels.

A significant difference was found, however, when the Winter 1986-1987 sample were analyzed separately. The overwhelming proportion of videos still involved all-male performers and portrayed females condescendingly, but there was a trend for both all-male videos and those with women to increase their overall share of Level IV ratings.

One other difference was the use of implicit or explicit nudity that went up from 10 percent in 1985 to 15.6 percent in 1986-87.



## 2A2B. 1986-87 CONCLUSIONS

Vincent found very little significant change between the two samples which concerned him.

He writes: "In a period when the rock music industry was being criticized for its orientation to sex, drugs and violence, we find that females were still portrayed as submissive, passive and physically attractive. In fact, we found small increases in the use of lingerie . . . nudity and violence. This may demonstrate a generally passive attitude toward these criticisms within the rock video industry. Even if the trend is unrelated, it raises concern about the socializing effect such life portrayals have on audiences. These videos can too easily provide young people with questionable behavior models."

## 2B. THE REASONS: THE MARKET

Before the anti-Baber forces gather together and call for the man's hanging it should be noted that the driving force in the promotion of music videos is not anyones particular ideology but what the market will buy.

Faludi notes that following the critical outcry that "Fatal Attractions" was anti-feminist producer Stanley Jaffe said, "This whole anti-feminist thing . . . is absurd. To sit here and suggest that we spent hours and weeks trying to figure out how to get across the notion that society is falling apart---no, not for me, not 15 minutes. We set out first and foremost to make a movie that would sell."

Faludi continues, "Jaffe is telling the truth. As anyone who has spent more than five minutes in Hollywood knows, the studio corridors are hardly overrun with distraught philosophers agonizing over civilization's collapse; they are too busy doing lunch. Hollywood is not half so interested in making social policy as it is in making money."

"But is it also true that these same two forces---a lack of self-examination and no lack of greed---make Hollywood a wonderfully exaggerated indicator of the collective subconscious, a sort of fun-house mirror of both the filmmakers' and the general public's private fears."

Faludi then quotes Darlene Chan, vice president of production at Davis Entertainment who says, "Movies, to a great extent, reflect what's going on rather than making new trends."

Two other research articles, one called "Image of Women in Television Advertising" and the other called "Perceptions of Traits of Women on Television," tend to agree with Chan's assessment. The media tends to reflect the impressions of those that peer into it.

The only thing that can be said about such a conclusion is that if you don't like what you're seeing then you might consider working towards changes on this side of the TV screen.

## Perceptions of the Traits of Women on Television

Rita A. Atwood, Susan Brown Zahn, and Gail Webber

*This study explored audience perceptions of the televised image of women. Responding to open-ended telephone interview techniques, 263 randomly sampled adults described their criteria for judging women shown on television as either positive or negative. Results indicated contemporary standards for evaluation were linked to a majority of responses, while traditional standards were reflected by a minority of responses. Chi-square tests showed no significant differences between responses from females and males sampled.*

Despite the increasing number of studies of the televised images of women, little is known about how people perceive such images. The obvious reason for this lack of knowledge is that the majority of related studies are content analyses which allow for limited inferences about audience perceptions (Butler & Paisley, 1980; Ceulemans & Fauconnier, 1979; Perloff, Brown, & Miller, 1982; Tuchman, Daniels, & Benet, 1978). A more subtle and complex reason may be that when audiences are studied, they are not provided adequate opportunity to say what they think.

Researchers who have examined televised images of women among audiences have looked mainly at effects of televised female stereotypes, conducted studies in laboratory settings or employed closed-ended survey methods, and used children as research subjects (Busby, 1975; McGhee & Frueh, 1980; Morgan, 1982; Pingree, 1978; Zuckerman, Singer, & Singer, 1980). Studies which have involved adult audiences or suggested alternative methods are infrequent (Goff, Goff, & Lehrer, 1980; Lull, Hanson, & Marx, 1977; Miller & Reeves, 1976; Tuchman, 1979).

One purpose of the present study was to pursue a research strategy of

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*Rita Atwood (Ph.D., University of Washington, 1980) is Assistant Professor of Radio-TV-Film at the University of Texas, Austin. Her research interests are information seeking and use behaviors, and communication systems in Latin America. Susan Brown Zahn (M.A., University of Texas, Austin, 1982) is Instructor of Communication at Cleveland State University. Her research interest is audience perceptions of mediated messages. Gail Webber (M.A., California State University, Fresno, 1977) is Coordinator of Women's Studies at California State University, Fresno. Her research interests are images of women in popular culture and perceptions of women's rights issues. This manuscript was accepted for publication August 1985.*

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open-ended interview techniques which allowed adult viewers to reply in their own terms. The rationale for such a strategy stemmed from the ideas that people actively pay attention to and interpret television content in diverse ways, and are capable of honestly reporting specific media experiences. It was assumed that these media experiences provoke both positive and negative judgments based on idiosyncratic frames of reference, as well as situational perception factors (Atwood & McLean, 1983; Dervin, 1983; McQuail, 1984). Another aim of this study, then, was to gain greater insight into the nature of criteria audience members engage when evaluating the image of women on television and factors which may be associated with criteria differences.

The focus of this study was on the traits or characteristics audience members perceived to be linked to positive and negative portrayals of women on television, and whether gender of the respondent was linked to differences in such perceptions. The study was designed to allow respondents freedom to ascertain their own definitions of what "positive" and "negative" meant, and to describe viewing situations most relevant to their definitions. The significance of this approach was that television viewers were treated as experts in the evaluation of content, supplanting the notion that content analysis should be the exclusive domain of researchers.

The research questions guiding this investigation were:

1. What patterns emerge in the characteristics respondents attribute to positive and negative images of women they see on television?
2. How useful is examining respondent gender differences in perceptions of women on television?

## Method

### Data Collection

The sample for this study was obtained by using a random digit computer program consisting of telephone prefixes. Telephone interviews were completed with residents of 263 households, 154 women and 109 men ranging in age from 17 to 79 ( $M = 33.81$ ,  $SD = 15.42$ ). There were higher percentages of women in the 35 to 79 age group and men in the 24 to 34 group, and approximately equal percentages in the 18 to 23 age group. The majority of respondents were White (80.6%); 9.5% were Hispanic, 7.6% were Black, and 2.3% were coded as Other. Of the total, 37.3% had completed four or more years of college, 38.5% had some college, and 24.2% had finished grade school or high school. The sample consisted of 56.7% single and 43.3% married people. Overall, women respondents were older, less educated, and more likely to be married. The 1980 census for this city indicates



that females were slightly overrepresented in the sample, while younger people were somewhat underrepresented, as were Blacks and Hispanics.

The interviews were conducted by trained graduate students during the last two weeks of April 1983. Most interviews took place in the early evening or on the weekend. The average interview was 15 minutes long. During the interview respondents were asked to specify a recent instance in which they had seen a woman portrayed in a positive way on television, and to cite as many as three reasons for evaluating the portrayal as positive. Respondents were asked to give similar information about a recent experience of seeing a woman shown in a negative way on television. Respondents then answered a series of demographic questions, and several questions about perceived changes in the televised image of women not reported here.

### Data Analysis

Analyses of the open-ended responses involved consensus development of categories and coding by authors (Dervin, 1983). Intercoder reliability scores were derived from a 10% subsample coded by an independent analyst (Holsti, 1969). The unit of analysis consisted of the separate answers given by respondents to each question, making the potential number of answers 789 ( $263 \times 3$ , for either variable).

The Positive Characteristics variable yielded four categories, with 596 responses and a 92% intercoder reliability. The Negative Characteristics variable was comprised of three categories containing 520 responses with 86% intercoder reliability. Chi-square tests were conducted on these two variables to ascertain differences among responses offered by female and male respondents.

### Results

The coding revealed four trait categories linked to positive assessments of women shown on television. These categories consisted of the following elements:

1. Determined, strong, independent (36.7%): Women are capable of overcoming obstacles, have strength and integrity, and take initiative. Examples given were that women are reliable, know what they want, and fight for their beliefs.
2. Professional, intelligent, skilled (25.7%): Women are career oriented, competent, and bright. Examples included that career women are treated with respect and are good at what they do.
3. Traditional, caretaker, feminine (23.8%): Women are nurturing, kind,

and attractive. Examples offered were that women have old world values, give in to others, and look pretty.

4. Realistic, nonstereotypical, equal to males (13.8%): Women are credible, and women are equal to or better than male counterparts. Examples were that women are like real people, won't take a back seat to a man, and sweat like men.

While these descriptions were attributed to a wide range of women appearing on television, the most frequently mentioned female characters were: Veronica Hamel who plays Joyce Davenport on *Hill Street Blues* (8.4% of the 241 respondents who cited a positive portrayal), Linda Evans who is Krystal on *Dynasty* (5.3%), and Tyne Daly and Sharon Gless acting on *Cagney and Lacy* (5.1%). As shown in Table 1, the characterizations of positive images of women on television did not differ significantly by gender of respondent.

Table 1  
Positive Characteristics of Women on Television

Positive Characteristics	Respondents		Total
	Male	Female	
Determined, strong, independent	78 (32.5%)	141 (39.6%)	219
Professional, intelligent, skilled	72 (30.0%)	81 (22.8%)	153
Traditional, caretaker, feminine	54 (22.5%)	88 (24.7%)	142
Realistic, nonstereotypical	36 (15.0%)	46 (12.9%)	82
Total	240	356	596

Note. Numbers represent responses given. Percentages are column percentages. Responses coded "miscellaneous" were excluded.  $\chi^2 (3, N = 596) = 5.65, p = .13$ .

Three criteria emerged as the bases for negative judgments about women shown on television:

1. Silly housewife, dumb blonde, sex object (43.3%): Women are stereotyped as stupid sex objects or incompetent housewives. Examples given were that women are dumb but sexy, and women's chief concern is drab laundry or dry roast.

2. Immoral, selfish, aggressive, evil (36.2%): Women lack concern for others or treat them cruelly; women are dishonest, too pushy, or bitchy. Examples included that women are jealous, malicious, or good girls gone bad.



3. Exploited, degraded victims, dependent (20.5%): Women are taken advantage of, ridiculed, abused, or they are submissive, weak, and unhealthy. Examples offered were women as the butt of jokes, easily manipulated, and always relying on men.

These traits were also assigned to various women shown on television, but Joan Collins as Alexis on *Dynasty* was cited by 10.3% of the 226 respondents who identified a negative portrayal, and Priscilla Barnes/blondes on *Three's Company* by 8.1% of the respondents. The analysis of gender differences among respondents' criteria for judging women's images on television as negative showed no significant difference, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2  
Negative Characteristics of Women on Television

Negative Characteristics	Respondents		Total
	Male	Female	
Silly housewife, sex object	98 (44.3%)	127 (42.5%)	225
Immoral, selfish, aggressive, evil	76 (34.4%)	112 (37.5%)	188
Exploited, victims, dependent	47 (21.3%)	60 (20.1%)	107
Total	221	299	520

Note. Numbers represent responses given. Percentages are column percentages. Responses coded "miscellaneous" were excluded.  $\chi^2 (2, N = 520) = .52, p = .77$ .

## Discussion

One of the most interesting findings of this investigation was that responses about perceived positive and negative images of women on television appeared to represent two conflicting sets of criteria for evaluation. A majority of responses reflected what might be termed "contemporary" criteria for assessing television depictions of women, while a minority of answers suggested a more "traditional" framework for judgment.

The contemporary standard was associated with three-fourths of the responses that categorized women on television as positive because they are strong, intelligent, professional, and realistic. Consistently, about two-thirds of the answers described women on television as negative because they are shown as weak, exploited victims, or as demented housewives and sex objects.

In contrast, the traditional standards for evaluating television women were mirrored in the one-fourth of the replies that judged women as posi-

tive because they are portrayed as moral, attractive, and taking care of others. Further, one-third of the responses that identified negative portrayals of women on television emphasized selfish, immoral, or aggressive traits. These criteria resemble the "madonna-whore" dichotomy by which women have been evaluated and portrayed in the past (DeBeauvoir, 1961; Hays, 1964).

Another noteworthy finding of this study was that the criteria for judging positive and negative television images of women was not significantly different for female and male respondents. One reason for the lack of difference may be that gender is only a rough indicator of experiences that might contribute to evaluative frames of reference. Another may be that frames of reference shift situationally in ways that have little to do with gender. The diversity among female and male responses, not the differences between them, emerged as most striking in this study.

In sum, these results offer support for the assertions that people actively construct meaning from their message environments, and that they are uniquely qualified for and capable of providing useful insight into such experiences. Thus, more sophisticated measures of variables associated with frames of reference, as well as situational perception variables, may prove valuable in future research on how audience members interpret televised images. Research that looks more closely at the links among audience perceptions, or production processes, and historical evolution of women's images in popular culture is also needed.

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v, G6  
Journalist QUARTERLY SPRING '85

By Pamela Kalis and Kimberly A. Neuendorf

## Aggressive Cue Prominence and Gender Participation in MTV

*Aggressive cues in MTV may be less prominent than critics indicate.*

► Rock and roll music has generated criticism both for the music itself and for the manner in which the music has been presented. When Elvis Presley appeared on the "Ed Sullivan Show" in 1956, camera operators were instructed to shoot him from the waist up because his pelvic gyrations were considered lewd. The Rolling Stones' 1965 release "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" was banned by many radio stations because of its suggestive lyrics.<sup>1</sup>

With cable television, popular music may now reach a large audience visually as well as aurally. The most important and pervasive outlet for rock videos is Music Television (MTV), a 24-hour network devoted to cablecasting some 1,200 rock videos, all of which are supplied by record companies for promotional purposes.<sup>2</sup> Costing Warner Communications and the American Express Company \$20 million to initiate in 1981, MTV offers 35.8 million cable homes nearly constant exposure to music videos.<sup>3</sup> MTV's average rating hit a high of 1.2% in 1983, and although it has since fallen (recent estimates halve the 1983 figure), advertisers eagerly continue to aim messages at teen viewers of music videos, and MTV revenues are up.<sup>4</sup>

Criticism has been leveled at MTV for its proliferation of supposedly hostile

imagery and sexist relational portrayals.<sup>5</sup> "[T]he message is that violence is normal and OK, that hostile sexual relations between men and women are common and acceptable, the heroes actively engage in torture and murder of others for fun."<sup>6</sup>

A number of content analytic studies have examined violence in rock music and music videos. Albert found intensity and violence to constitute the most important factors in discriminating among rock songs; evaluations of beauty, interestingness and goodness played very minor roles.<sup>7</sup> A study by the NCTV<sup>8</sup> investigated 160 hours of music videos, estimating that viewers are exposed to an average of 18 instances of violence per hour. Sherman and Dominick found 57% of concept

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Jaeger, "Rock Shows its Ugliest Face," the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 15, 1984, pp. 1D, 9D. For an "Ed Sullivan Show" appearance, the lyrics to "Let's Spend the Night Together" were altered to "let's spend some time together."

<sup>2</sup> Howard Polskin, "MTV Rocks and Rolls over its Rivals: The Cable Network Plays Very, Very Tough in its Drive to Dominate the Record Business," *TV Guide*, September 22, 1984, pp. 40-42, 44; Fred Bruning, "The Perils of Rock on 'The Box,'" *MacClellan*, November 14, 1983, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ed Levine, "TV Rocks with Music," the *New York Times Magazine*, May 8, 1983, pp. 42, 55-56, 58, 60-61; Richard Zoglin, "MTV Faces a Mid-Life Crisis," *Time*, June 29, 1987, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> Zoglin, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Charles M. Berg, "Sex, Violence and Rock 'n' Roll: The Manipulation of Women in Music-Videos," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Chicago, Illinois, 1984; Richard C. Vincent, Dennis K. Davis and Lilly Ann Boruszkowski, "Sexism on MTV: The Portrayal of Women in Rock Videos," *Journalism Quarterly*, 64:750-755 (Winter 1987).

<sup>6</sup> Jaeger, *ibid.*, p. D8. This quote is the expressed view of Dr. Thomas Radecki, the controversial chair of the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV).

<sup>7</sup> Werner G. Albert, "Dimensionality of Perceived Violence in Rock Music: Musical Intensity and Lyrical Violence Content," *Popular Music & Society*, 6:27-38 (Spring 1978).

<sup>8</sup> National Coalition on Television Violence, *NCTV Music-video Monitoring Project*, unpublished data, 1984.

videos<sup>9</sup> to contain violent acts, with an average of 2.9 separate acts per concept video, and Baxter *et al.* pegged the proportion of videos containing any violent acts or crime at 53%.<sup>10</sup> Thirty-four percent of videos analyzed in a 1985 study con-

<sup>9</sup> Barry L. Sherman and Joseph R. Dominick, "Violence and Sex in Music Videos: TV and Rock 'n' Roll," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1986, p. 79. We followed Sherman and Dominick's characterization of "videotype" as being concept- or performance-oriented. Concept videos were defined as those in which more than 50% of the video consisted of narrative, dramatization, story, or surrealistic setting. Performance videos were defined as those in which more than 50% of the video consisted of studio or concert performance.

<sup>10</sup> Richard L. Baxter, Cynthia De Riemer, Ann Landini, Larry Leslie and Michael W. Singletary, "A Content Analysis of Music Videos," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 29:333-340 (Summer 1985).

<sup>11</sup> Vincent, Davis and Boruszkowski, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Donald M. Davis, "Nihilism in Music Television," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Chicago, Illinois, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> Sherman and Dominick, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Jane D. Brown and Kenneth Campbell, "Race and Gender in Music Videos: The Same Beat but a Different Drummer," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1986, pp. 94-106.

<sup>15</sup> Leonard Berkowitz, "Words and Symbols as Stimuli to Aggressive Responses," in John F. Knutson, ed., *The Control of Aggression: Implications for Basic Research* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 113-143; Leonard Berkowitz, "Some Determinants of Impulsive Aggression: Role of Mediated Associations with Reinforcements for Aggression," *Psychological Review*, 81:165-176 (1974); Richard H. Walters, Edward Llewellyn Thomas and C. William Acker, "Enhancement of Punitive Behavior by Audio-Visual Displays," *Science*, 136:872-873 (1962).

<sup>16</sup> Events are "happenings" while objects are "things that can be seen or touched." Events nearly always imply at least one initiator and one recipient, while objects cannot have an initiator but may have one or more recipients. Examples of aggressive events were: "policeman with gun and nightstick throws young boy to ground," "motorcycle gang chases teenage boy and corners him in alley," "woman purposely sets bar on fire which catches man on fire." Examples of aggressive objects were: "human heads on display in cases," "spiked glove (gauntlet)," "corpse in magazine photo."

<sup>17</sup> Doll Zillmann and Jennings Bryant, "Pornography, Sexual Callousness, and the Trivialization of Rape," *Journal of Communication*, Fall 1982, pp. 10-19; Neil M. Malamuth and J.V.P. Check, "The Effects of Mass Media Exposure on Acceptance of Violence Against Women: A Field Experiment," *Journal of Research in Personality*, 15:436-446 (1981).

<sup>18</sup> Robert Krull and James H. Watt, "Television Viewing and Aggression: An Examination of Three Models," Paper presented to the Mass Communication Division at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Montreal, Canada, 1973; James H. Watt and Robert Krull, "Arousal Model Components in Television Programming: Form Activity and Violent Content," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Chicago, Illinois, 1975 (as cited in Althea Huston-Stein, Sandra Fox, Douglas Greer, Bruce Watkins and Jane Whitaker, "The Effects of TV Action and Violence on Children's Social Behavior," *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 138:183-191 (1981)); James H. Watt Jr. and Robert Krull, "An Examination of Three Models of Television Viewing and Aggression," *Human Communication Research*, 3:99-112 (1977).

<sup>19</sup> Berkowitz, 1974, *op. cit.*

tained violence,<sup>11</sup> while Davis found that 44% of concept videos contained nihilistic images.<sup>12</sup> Other music video investigations have found women to be more likely than men to initiate aggressive acts,<sup>13</sup> and blacks more likely than whites to engage in prosocial acts and sexual acts and less likely to engage in antisocial acts.<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of this research was to explore the content and structure of music videos, extending this extant evidence, and to place the findings into the context of research addressing violence, aggression and media. This study examined three characteristics that have theoretic relevance to media effects:

1) Pervasiveness of aggressive cues in music videos: Due to evidence that suggests an object or event has the potential of eliciting aggressive actions to the extent that the object or event has aggressive meaning, it is of interest to examine the frequency of cues deemed aggressive by viewers of MTV.<sup>15</sup> A delineation was made between aggressive events and aggressive objects according to standard definitions of those terms<sup>16</sup>; prior investigations had centered on events or actions as aggression-inducing, while failing to include simple objects that may carry aggressive meaning by audience members. The highly symbolic nature of much video imagery led us to believe that such aggressive objects need to be included.

2) Gender portrayals within a context of aggression: Due to evidence that suggests that the genders of participants in aggressive acts will be likely to influence expectations by observers about the appropriateness of such actions, it is of interest to examine the ways in which males and females are shown in aggressive contexts on MTV.<sup>17</sup>

3) Pacing of music videos: Due to evidence that suggests that programs of high pace and variation increase physiological arousal and subsequent aggressive behavior in individuals regardless of the violent content contained in the programs, it is of interest to examine the pacing of MTV content.<sup>18</sup> While such arousal is not a necessary component of subsequent aggression in those exposed to aggressive cues, it does facilitate the process and strengthens the aggressive response.<sup>19</sup>

► Pamela Kalis, who received her M.A. from Cleveland State University, is an operations coordinator at WMMS-FM, Cleveland. Kimberly Neuendorf, is an associate professor of communication at Cleveland State University. They thank Mark Ulaszewski for his valuable assistance on this project.

### Methods

Over a period of seven days in 1985, 14 hours of MTV content in 2-hour units were randomly videotaped off-cable. Three sets of content analytic and survey response procedures were developed in order to measure (1) the occurrence of and audience validation of aggressive cues, (2) the prominence and cue type, and the initiators and recipients of, validated aggressive cues, and (3) the pacing, video-type and real time length of music videos.<sup>20</sup>

In the initial identification of aggressive cues, coders were instructed to collect an exhaustive list of *potentially* perceived aggressive cues. An aggressive cue was defined as "the occurrence(s) (video or audio) of objects or events actually occurring or simulated representing physical harm or the threat thereof." Song lyrics were *not* analyzed, except to the extent that the action in the video dramatized or corresponded to the lyrics. Since the goal of this cue collection process was to achieve exhaustiveness rather than reliability (hence the validation process described below), high intercoder agreement was not mandated.<sup>21</sup>

Using a technique unique among content analyses of music videos, each of the 1,108 cues identified was assessed for "perceived aggressiveness" by a response survey of at least 50 respondents.<sup>22</sup> Those cues with means of 5 or greater (on a scale where 0="not at all aggressive" and 10="extremely aggressive") comprised the sample of aggressive cues retained for subsequent analyses—i.e., they were *validated*. Validated cues were re-examined via videotape for features described below.

Coding of the *prominence* with which aggressive cues were displayed consisted of coders (1) indicating those shots in which aggressive cues were shown, (2) identifying the type of camera shots employed (i.e., long shots, medium shots, close-ups, and extreme close-ups), and (3) noting the time devoted to the display of aggressive cues. The *type of cue*—event or object—was coded. Data were collected concerning the type (i.e., male human,

female human, animal, inanimate object, other) and number of *initiators and recipients* present. An initiator was an individual who was shown as instigating or bringing about the aggressive cue, while a recipient was a target of the cue. Initiators and recipients could be singular (e.g., one male) or multiple (e.g., two females; one dog and three males). Reliabilities for the coding of these variables ranged from .77 to 1.0.<sup>23</sup>

In the pacing analysis, coders recorded the number of cuts in each video. A cut was operationalized as the occurrence of any of the following: Take, dissolve, wipe, or split screen special effect (i.e., any change in the field of view, not counting a zoom or pan, was a cut). A shot represented the single uninterrupted image recorded by one camera,<sup>24</sup> i.e., the content between two adjacent cuts. Each video was categorized as a concept or performance video (see note 9). The total length of each video was measured in seconds. Coding reliabilities for these variables were all near 1.0.

### Results

*Pervasiveness of Aggressive Cues in Music Videos.* Table 1 presents structural descriptors for the total sample of videos, and for concept and performance videos separately. Nearly 40% of the 163 videos were free of validated aggressive cues. Differences did exist between the two video types: 75% of concept videos contained at least one aggressive cue, while 29% of performance videos did, and 71% of validated

<sup>20</sup> Complete sets of codebooks, questionnaires, and coding forms for these analyses are available from the authors.

<sup>21</sup> Even so, 78% of cues identified in a sample of 10 videos were matched by two 2-person teams—i.e., the teams clearly referred to the same cue, though they may not have described the cue in identical terms. In a more conservative analysis, 41% of codings were in identical or near-identical wordings; 69% of all validated cues (see following section) were joint-coded in this more stringent analysis.

<sup>22</sup> Due to the large number of cues, each respondent assessed only about 160 randomly assigned cues. Subjects were students enrolled in undergraduate courses at a large urban university, with a mean age of 24 years—a sample similar to the intended MTV audience. The distribution of mean aggressiveness scores across cues was normal.

<sup>23</sup> For camera shot, the percent-agreement was 85%, with Scott's pi of .77; for event vs. object coding, the percent agreement was 100%; for initiator and recipient type, the percent agreement was 98%, with Scott's pi of .97; for time per aggressive cue, the Pearson correlation coefficient was .92.

<sup>24</sup> Alan Wurtzel, *Television Production, Second Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983).

TABLE 1

Music Video Aggressive Cue Pervasiveness, Duration, and Pacing, in Percent

	Total Sample	Concept Videos	Performance Videos
Videos Containing Validated Aggressive Cues	60.7%	75.0%	29.4%
Shots Containing Aggressive Cues	12.7	16.0	4.8
Cues Classified as Events (vs. Objects)	66.3	71.3	26.0
Total Video Time Devoted to Display of Aggressive Cues	9.4	12.2	3.1
Shots Containing Aggressive Cues in Subset of Videos Containing Aggressive Cues (n=number of videos)	18.2 (n=99)	19.6 (n=84)	11.3 (n=15)
Mean Cuts Per Video	80.1	82.4	75.1
Average Duration Aggressive Cue Displayed Per Shot (in seconds)	2.2	2.3	2.1
Average Total Aggressiveness Score Per Video	62.6	86.4	16.6
N	163	112	51

aggressive cues in concept videos were classified as events (vs. objects) while 26% of the cues in performance videos were classified as events.

While most videos (61%) contained at least some aggressive cues, the proportion of video shots devoted to aggressive content was small: Aggressive cues were found in 13% of all shots, with such content more prevalent in concept videos (16% of shots) than in performance videos (5%). Even when examining the subset of videos containing aggressive cues, these percentages were still small: 18% overall, 20% for concept videos and 11% for performance videos. Real time devoted to aggressive cues was correspondingly brief: 9% of the total music video time (12% for concept videos, 3% for performance videos).

Despite this predominance of nonaggressive content, an analysis of camera shots utilized at the beginning and at the end of each shot in which an aggressive cue was displayed indicated that focal length prominence is given to aggressive cues when they appear. A full 40% of all

beginning camera shots were in extreme close-up, with an additional 21% in close-up. And, 39% of all end camera shots were in extreme close-up, 21% in close-up.

Applying the results of the response survey to the 333 validated aggressive cues (an additional 775 were not validated), a "total aggressiveness score" was calculated for each video (i.e., a simple sum of the mean perceived aggressiveness scores for all validated cues in a video). The average total aggressiveness score was 62.6. For concept videos, this average was 86.4, and for performance videos, 16.6—a statistically significant difference ( $t=5.60$ ,  $p<.0001$ ). Concept videos comprised eight of the top 10 most aggressive videos.<sup>25</sup>

*Gender Portrayals of Participants in Aggressive Events.* Table 2 presents the frequencies of types of initiator/recipient pairings for aggressive events with identifiable initiators and recipients. Males<sup>26</sup> were the most frequently identified recipients of aggression (58% of all recipients) and the second most frequently identified initiators of aggression (42% of all initiators), following "other" types (44%). Females were *infrequently* identified as recipients of aggression (13% of recipients) and were slightly more likely to be identified as initiators of aggression (15% of initiators). However, female recipients of aggression were likely to receive such aggression from

<sup>25</sup> A complete list of all videos analyzed, with total aggressiveness scores, is available from the authors.

<sup>26</sup> Table 2 collapses across singular and multiple male and female initiators and recipients; the category "other" includes groups of mixed gender (8% of initiators and 13% of recipients), inanimate objects, animals and those whose type coders were "unable to determine."

TABLE 2  
Gender of Initiator/Recipient Pairs

Initiators	Recipients			Total
	Males	Females	Other	
Males	240	77	90	407
Females	112	8	25	145
Other	211	41	176	428
Total	563	126	291	980

Chi-square=70.56, df=4,  $p<.0001$

TABLE 3  
Gender of Initiators and Beginning Camera Shot

Initiators	Beginning Camera Shot				Total
	Long Shot	Medium Shot	Close-up Shot	Extreme Close-up Shot	
Males	65	117	99	149	430
Females	2	35	55	62	154
Other	52	51	73	253	429
Total	119	203	227	464	1013

Chi-square=91.09, df=6,  $p<.0001$

TABLE 4  
Gender of Recipients and Beginning Camera Shot

Recipients	Beginning Camera Shot				Total
	Long Shot	Medium Shot	Close-up Shot	Extreme Close-up Shot	
Males	98	146	139	321	704
Females	24	34	62	63	183
Other	53	56	88	171	368
Total	175	236	289	555	1255

Chi-square=21.54, df=6,  $p<.0015$

males (61% of female-received aggression). The most frequent initiator-recipient pairing was male-to-male (24% of all pairings), while the least frequent pairing was female-to-female (1%). Comparisons between the two video types did not uncover striking differences.

Male-initiated aggression, female-initiated aggression and aggression initiated by others did not differ substantially in amount of time shown per occurrence (2.0 seconds, 2.2 seconds and 2.3 seconds, respectively; the overall average was 2.2 seconds per shot—see Table 1). Aggres-

sion aimed at females was, however, shown for a significantly longer period of time than aggression aimed at males or others (3.1 seconds, compared with 2.0 seconds and 2.1 seconds, respectively;  $F=19.28$ ,  $p<.0001$ ).

Tables 3 and 4 show results for focal length prominence, broken down by the gender of participants. Both crosstabulations for initiators (Table 3) and recipients (Table 4) show statistically significant relationships between gender and type of camera shot. In both cases, "others" and females were more likely to be shown in

close-up or extreme close-up than were males. Seventy-six percent of "other" initiators were shown in such prominence, as were 76% of female initiators and 58% of male initiators.<sup>27</sup> Seventy percent of "other" recipients were displayed in close-up or extreme close-up, compared with 68% of female recipients and 65% of male initiators. Comparisons between the two video types did not reveal significant differences.

*Music Video Pacing.* The 14 hours of music video content yielded 13,058 cuts—an average of 80.1 cuts per video. Concept videos were found to be somewhat faster-paced than were performance videos; the former had an average of 82.4 cuts per video, while the latter had 75.1 (see Table 1; this difference was statistically significant at  $t=22.01$ ,  $p<.0001$ ).

### Discussion

Aggressive cues may be less prominent in music videos than common criticisms would lead one to believe. Multiple indicators in this investigation showed a predominance of nonaggressive stimuli: 13% of all shots contained aggressive cues, constituting 9% of all video time, and nearly 40% of the videos in the sample contained no validated aggressive cues. Although concept videos consistently contained more aggressive content than did performance videos, aggressive cues were still a minor portion of their content.

Interestingly, of the top four most aggressive videos, three utilized violent themes in an effort to convey pro-social messages. For example, the second-rated video, The Rolling Stones' "Too Much Blood," is itself a commentary on excessive media violence. Following shots of

violent TV programs and a shot of a TV set oozing blood, the video ends with a woman throwing a television out the window.

Some critics will certainly argue that the mere presence of aggressive cues is cause for alarm, regardless of context. And, 61% of all videos *did* contain one or more validated aggressive cues. Indeed, this study found somewhat more aggressiveness than have prior music video analyses.<sup>28</sup> Such differences may be due to the inclusion in this analysis of aggressive *objects* as well as *events*, a different year of videos sampled, and/or the important addition by this investigation of *validation* by response survey for perceived aggressiveness of cues.

A comparison with conventional television entertainment content may provide further insight. Using definitions of physical and verbal aggression that are consistent with those used in this study, Greenberg<sup>29</sup> content analyzed three seasons of prime time network programming. The most recent season analyzed, that of 1977-78, had an hourly rate of 39 instances of physical or verbal aggression. Including *events* only for comparability, this MTV analysis found 34.7 instances per hour. If one includes *objects* as well—something content analyses of conventional TV have not done—this hourly rate obviously increases. MTV content seems consistent in amount of aggressiveness with prime time TV of the late 1970's.

The response survey that validated these cues was both problematic in its translation of visual/verbal cues into labels in a questionnaire and highly valuable in its clarification of what imagery is and is not considered aggressive by audience members.<sup>30</sup> Berkowitz's aggressive cue perspective would predict that those cues judged more aggressive will elicit more aggressive responses;<sup>31</sup> the response survey showed that *objects* as well as *events* may possess such aggressive meanings.

The inclusion of *objects* to the coding scheme is unique to this investigation. Thirty-four percent of all validated aggressive cues were objects, leading us to conclude that a substantial body of poten-

<sup>27</sup> These percentages are obtained by adding the figures for close-ups and extreme close-ups.

<sup>28</sup> National Coalition on Television Violence, *ibid*; Sherman and Dominick, *ibid*.

<sup>29</sup> Bradley S. Greenberg, *Life on Television: Content Analyses of U.S. TV Drama* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1980).

<sup>30</sup> With sometimes surprising results—e.g., "barbed wire" and "person makes fist motion toward courtroom judge" were not validated, while "woman elbows man in his ribs" and "skidding bus" were validated. A complete list of all cues tested for validation, with means and standard deviations for aggressiveness scores indicated, is available from the authors.

<sup>31</sup> Berkowitz, 1973, *op. cit*.



tially aggressive stimuli has heretofore been ignored. Inclusion of objects is especially pertinent to this content type, given the abstract nature of many of the visuals, the clear "parallels between dream structure and music video structure."<sup>32</sup>

When aggressive cues are shown, they seem to be given prominence—cues are highly likely to be shown in either extreme close-up or in close-up. In such shots aggressive cues do not compete with other stimuli contained in a shot, and viewers may be more likely to notice them.<sup>33</sup>

Quick pacing may add to the aggressive potential of music videos. In addition to the greater level of activity attributable to a tightly edited video, the rapid juxtaposition of discrete visual elements (a "digital narrative" as described by Jones<sup>34</sup>) may be superior to verbal descriptions in presenting a variety of unrelated stimuli quickly. Concept videos, which were twice as prevalent in this sample as were performance videos, were also paced faster. This "triple whammy" of the concept video (i.e., its greater prevalence, higher level of aggressiveness, and faster pacing) indicates its greater potential for mediation of aggressive effects.

Contrary to the criticism that excessive violence is aimed primarily against women,<sup>35</sup> the findings indicated that males were shown as targets of aggression more than 3.5 times as often as were females. And, males were more likely to be depicted as recipients than initiators of aggression, in contrast to females, who were more likely to be depicted as initiators than recipients. Using Gerbner *et al.*'s risk ratio scheme<sup>36</sup> we may compare findings of this study with those of others. In this investigation, the proportion figure was -1.38 for males, compared to -1.05 in the Sherman and Dominick music video study and Gerbner *et al.*'s 1969-78 average of -1.18 for conventional television. This study found a female ratio of +1.15, compared to +1.15 by Sherman and Dominick and Gerbner's average of -1.23.<sup>37</sup>

This study has confirmed a consistency in female portrayals across music video studies, differentiating such content from conventional TV, in that MTV females

were more likely to be initiators than recipients of aggression.<sup>38</sup> (Sherman and Dominick have labeled this reversal the "predatory female" stereotype of music videos.) As if in compensation for their infrequent appearance in any role, however, when females were shown as recipients, they were displayed on the screen for a significantly longer period of time, and females were more likely than males to be shown in close-up or extreme close-up as both initiators and recipients. Thus, while female involvement in aggressive activities seems a "rare event," its appearance is accorded the attention such a rare event deserves—perhaps making its occurrence more memorable in the bargain.

Aggression is not a necessary component for a video's success as art or as commerce—the 52 videos that contained no validated cues included many successful songs, including Don Henley's "Boys of Summer," awarded "Best Video" honors at the Second Annual MTV Video Music Awards.<sup>39</sup> Award winners from seven categories appeared in our sample; in only one case—that of David Atkins' choreography for "Sad Songs (Say So Much)" (Elton John)—did the video register any aggressiveness.<sup>40</sup>

Recent drops in video budgets would predict a cut in *concept* video production.

(Please turn to page 229)

<sup>32</sup> Pat Aufderheide, "Music Videos: The Look of the Sound," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1986, pp. 57-76; Aufderheide also notes the importance of *object* symbolism, using "Nazisque" iconography as an example.

<sup>33</sup> Wurtzel, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Steve Jones, "Digital Narrative and Music Videos," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, San Antonio, Texas, 1987.

<sup>35</sup> Jaeger, *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Nancy Signorielli, Michael Morgan, and Marilyn Jackson-Beeck, "Growing Up with Television: The Demonstration of Power: Violence Profile No. 10," *Journal of Communication*, Summer 1979, pp. 177-196.

<sup>37</sup> The absolute value of a negative number is the proportion of recipients to initiators; a positive number represents the proportion of initiators to recipients.

<sup>38</sup> Brown and Campbell, *op. cit.*; Sherman and Dominick, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> "The Global Village Gets a Bit Rowdy as the Captains of Video Convene for an MTV Salute," *People Weekly*, Sept. 30, 1985, pp. 32-33.

<sup>40</sup> Ken Terry, "Henley Sweeps MTV Awards; Geldof Gets Special Recognition," *Variety*, Sept. 18, 1985, p. 74.

By Richard C. Vincent

## Clio's Consciousness Raised? Portrayal Of Women in Rock Videos, Re-examined

*In period when music video industry was being criticized for orientation to sex, sexism still abounds.*

► Communication researchers have analyzed various forms of television content to determine how each form uniquely distorts everyday life. Such research examines such matters as the presentation of racial minorities, the elderly, sex-roles, social behavior and family role structures

<sup>1</sup> Bradley S. Greenberg, *Life on Television: Content Analyses of U.S. TV Drama* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1980); Bradley S. Greenberg, "Television and Role Socialization: An Overview," in National Institute of Mental Health, *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), pp. 179-190.

<sup>2</sup> George Gerbner, "Violence in Television Drama: Trends in Symbolic Functions," in George A. Comstock and Eli Abraham Rubinstein, eds., *Television and Social Behavior, Vol 1: Media Content and Control*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 386-414; Albert Bandura and Richard H. Walters, *Social Learning and Personality Development* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Leo W. Jeffries, *Mass Media Processes and Effects* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> J. Ray Brown, *Children and Television* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1976); Grant Noble, *Children in Front of the Small Screen* (London: Constable, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Richard E. Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt, *Political Socialization* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969); Melvin Lawrence DeFeur, "Occupational Roles as Portrayed on Television," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 28:57-74 (1964); Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Walker Benet, *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in Mass Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> Barry L. Sherman and Joseph R. Dominick, "Violence and Sex in Music Videos: TV and Rock 'n' Roll," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1986, pp. 79-93; Richard L. Baxter, Cynthia De Riemer, Ann Landini, Larry Leslie and Michael W. Singletary, "A Content Analysis of Music Videos," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 29:333-340 (Summer 1985); Jane D. Brown and Kenneth Campbell, "Race and Gender in Music Videos: The Same Beat but a Different Drummer," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1986, pp. 94-105; Richard E. Caplan, "Violent Program Content in Music Video," *Journalism Quarterly*, 62:144-147 (Winter 1985).

<sup>7</sup> Richard C. Vincent, Dennis K. Davis and Lilly Ann Boruszowski, "Sexism on MTV: A Content Analysis of Rock Videos," *Journalism Quarterly* 64:750-755, 941 (Winter 1987).

and interactions and generally finds that fairly traditional and stereotypical representations of life prevail in television programming and advertising.<sup>1</sup> Of further concern is the potential effect such characterizations may have on our perceptions of reality. Gerbner's cultivation theory suggests that media teaches us about American values and myths, while the somewhat similar social learning theory of Bandura contends that children learn new attitudes and behavior directly from television.<sup>2</sup> Both theories propose that exposure to sex-role and other societal stereotypes found in mass media will help foster the development of comparable attitudes and behaviors.<sup>3</sup> Other researchers have documented the potential for children to link TV-generated experiences to their own lives.<sup>4</sup> In addition, content studies have raised concern on the potential effects of systematic presentations of reality on child and adolescent goal-setting.<sup>5</sup> One area where recent life portrayal analysis has been conducted is the rock video. Music videos, of course, are particularly geared to a younger audience.

Previous research has examined gender portrayals in music videos.<sup>6</sup> An earlier work by the author also provides a systematic review of the levels of sexism found in rock video female character portrayals.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of the present study is to compare the portrayal of women in music

► Richard C. Vincent is assistant professor of communication at the University of Hawaii, Manoa. An earlier version of this manuscript was delivered at the 1987 annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association in Boston. The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions made by Lilly Ann Boruszowski, Rose Chen, Dennis Davis, Karen Iboshi, Teresa Takaki and Christine Vincent.

TABLE 1

Video Sexism by Sex of Performers, in Percent

Level of Sexism	1985	
	All Male	All Female and Mixed
Level I: Condescending	59.8%	34.8%
Level II: Keep Her Place	16.1	21.7
Level III: Contradictory	12.6	13.0
Level IV: Fully Equal	11.5	30.4
sum:	N = 87	N = 23
Level of Sexism	1986-87	
	All Male	All Female and Mixed
Level I: Condescending	52.2%	10.0%
Level II: Keep Her Place	10.9	13.3
Level III: Contradictory	6.5	13.3
Level IV: Fully Equal	30.4	63.3
sum:	N = 92	N = 30

1985:  $X^2 = 6.64$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .08$ 1986-87:  $X^2 = 14.57$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .005$ 

in 15.6% of the videos in 1986-87. In both years 41.8% of the sample used highly seductive outerwear; 10.9% (1985) vs. 16.4% (1986-87) used women in lingerie and lingerie adaptations. Twelve videos (10.9%) presented some or all of their women in bathing suits in 1985, while 13 (10.7%) did so in 1986-87. Hence we see small, but nonsignificant, increases in lingerie/lingerie adaptations ( $X^2 = 1.46$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .23$ ) and nudity ( $X^2 = 1.60$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .21$ ) between 1985 and 1986-87.

When some form of alluring attire was present there were significant differences when compared with level of sexism in 1985 ( $X^2 = 19.07$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ) and in 1986-87 ( $X^2 = 29.50$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ). For illustrative purposes, alluring attire as it

compares with levels of sexism is presented in Table 2.

Nonsignificant results between alluring attire and sex of musician for both years (1985  $X^2 = .37$ , 1 d.f.  $p = .55$ ; 1986-87  $X^2 = .53$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .47$ ; overall  $X^2 = 1.03$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .31$ ) suggest that such dress is often used when female performers are present as well as when they are not. As an example, our most recent collection of videos has women clothed in an alluring way in some 50% of the female videos versus 58% of those by males.

4) The prevailing form of male-female contact was simple touching (62.7%, 1985; 49.3%, 1986-87). This was followed by kissing (29.1%, 1985; 25.4%, 1986-87), contact while dancing (20.0%, 1985; 30.3%, 1986-87), hugging (27.3%, 1985; 24.6%, 1986-87), heavy petting (4.6%, 1985; 4.1%, 1986-87), and implied love-making (1.8%, 1985; 4.1%, 1986-87). Nonsignificant differences were found between sexism and "intimate touch" for both years (1985  $X^2 = 5.78$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .12$ ; 1986-87  $X^2 = 4.09$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .25$ ), while significance was uncovered only between sex of musician and touch in 1985 (1985  $X^2 = .03$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .86$ ; 1986-87  $X^2 = .27$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .61$ ). There was no significant change for the occurrence of intimate touch between the earlier and later time period ( $X^2 = .00$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .96$ ). Intimate contact as it compares with levels of sexism is presented in Table 2.

5) Of the videos analyzed, 34.6% used violence in 1985 while 39.3% did so in 1986-87. The difference was nonsignificant ( $X^2 = .57$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .45$ ). Most acts of violence in videos were of "men to men" (20.3%, 1985; 20.0%, 1986-87), followed by "men to women" (9.1%, 1985; 14.8%, 1986-87), "men to object" (10.9%, 1985; 9.0%, 1986-87), and "women to men" (7.3%, 1985; 9.8%, 1986-87). In three of these four categories we see small, but nonsignificant changes. Most violence was found in videos coded for Level I sexism (17.6% of 1985 videos; 19.7% of 1986-87 videos).

Violence to women, performed by either a male or female aggressor was significant by musician's sex in 1985 ( $X^2 = 6.89$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .01$ ), but not in 1986-87 ( $X^2 = 2.33$ , 1

TABLE 2

Videos with Alluring Attire and Intimate Touch, by Level of Sexism, 1985 and 1986-87, in Percent

1985				
Level of Sexism	Alluring Attire		Intimate Touch	
	Present	Absent	Present	Absent
Level I: Condescending	34%	21%	22%	33%
Level II: Keep Her Place	11	6	8	9
Level III: Contradictory	3	10	5	8
Level IV: Fully Equal	2	14	2	14
Total	49%	51%	36%	64%
N = 110			N = 110	
1986-87				
Level of Sexism	Alluring Attire		Intimate Touch	
	Present	Absent	Present	Absent
Level I: Condescending	33%	9%	17%	25%
Level II: Keep Her Place	8	3	6	6
Level III: Contradictory	5	3	4	5
Level IV: Fully Equal	10	29	10	29
Total	56%	44%	36%	64%
N = 122			N = 122	

1985  $X^2$  for alluring attire = 19.07, 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ 1986-87  $X^2$  for alluring attire = 29.50, 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ 1985  $X^2$  for intimate touch = 5.78, 3 d.f.,  $p = .12$ 1986-87  $X^2$  for intimate touch = 4.09, 3 d.f.,  $p = .25$ 

d.f.,  $p = .13$ ). Violence to men by either sex was nonsignificant in 1985 ( $X^2 = .13$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .73$ ), but significant for 1986-87 ( $X^2 = 4.59$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .05$ ). Overall there was no significant change for either type by year (female violence:  $X^2 = 1.49$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .22$ ; male violence:  $X^2 = .69$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .41$ ).

### Discussion

Our results suggest that sexism still is fairly high in music videos even though there was a 22% decline in videos rated Level I. The change was largely counterbalanced by a 173% increase in Level IV. This leads us to the principal finding of this study: The degree of sexism in Winter 1986-87 rock videos varies by the sex of the musician when we break videos down by all male performers and all female or mixed performers. The presence of women, therefore, seems to make a difference. This

was not the case for the Summer 1985 videos. A major change has occurred over this fairly short time period, possibly due to an increased concern for the role of women in music television.

Among the changes uncovered in our analysis were notable increases in Level IV ratings for both all-male videos and those with women, up 156 percent and 108 percent respectively. This would suggest a greater awareness among music video artists overall. Still, the most common form of sexism in exclusively male performer videos is by far at Level I (53.3%), down only 11% from the earlier period. Major change for female artists was a 52% decline in Level I videos.

In the recent sample of videos it seems just as common as ever for women to be used exclusively as decorative objects. They are often clad in highly seductive

television to portrayals found 18 months earlier. Since our original study was conducted we have seen an increase in public awareness on the potential suggestiveness of rock music generally and the acknowledgement that rock videos tend to commonly portray women in a sexy fashion. In the Fall of 1985 the ad hoc group, Parents Music Resource Center, lead by Tippy Gore and several other wives of prominent congressmen, made charges at a U.S. Senate Hearing that there was too much sex and violence in rock music and music videos. Although these charges had been made earlier, the hearings brought major attention to the controversy as the rock music industry rallied to defend itself. Television news audiences saw such unlikely allies as singers John Denver and Frank Zappa speaking out in support of the musician's right to free speech. A record labeling agreement was reached by the industry and Parent's Music. Also at this time MTV's national audience share began to erode and new programming strategies were being discussed and implemented.<sup>8</sup> As Buzz Bindle, a former MTV program director, stated at the time: "The music video industry is going through a re-evaluation process... (They're) just trying to make the channel more relevant for today. That's the challenge."<sup>9</sup> Consequently a Winter 1986-87 sample period, although it comes only 18 months after our original data set, offers the opportunity to study changes over a relatively short but crucial period in the development of rock videos.

To guide the study a series of research questions were created: 1) Did changes occur in the level of sexism found in all videos over the two test years of our study? 2) Did changes occur in the level of sexism for videos with and without female musicians? 3) Was there a change in the use of alluring attire (seductive outerwear, excluding swimwear; lingerie and lingerie adaptations; bathing suits; or implied/explicit nudity) for the women in our video sample, and when compared with sexism and sex of the musician? 4) Was there a change in the occurrence of intimate touch (kissing, hugging, petting or implied love-

making) between men and women in our video sample, and when compared with sexism and sex of the musician? 5) Was there a change for overall depiction of violence, violence directed by either sex toward women, and violence by either sex toward men?

### Method

The study was limited to music videos aired on MTV. A random cluster sample was drawn from MTV weekday programming. The same technique was used for both data sets.

Videos were recorded in Summer 1985 and Winter 1986-1987. More than 50 hours of programming were recorded and included some 570 videos. Videos were eliminated only if they were live performance types without a story line (typically a filmed concert or closed musical session where footage only comes from the performance itself), when they lacked female characters (as musician and/or character actor), or when there were subsequent appearances of the video in the sample (we were interested in the assortment of videos during a sample period, not their playtime). Two hundred thirty-two music videos remained for analysis—110 for 1985, 122 for 1986-87. Our criteria for inclusion did not change between our earlier and later sample.

We modified a scale of sexism by Pingree, *et. al.*<sup>10</sup> Details can be found in our earlier study.<sup>11</sup> The four-item ordinal consciousness scale that measures how women are portrayed is again employed here:

LEVEL I: "Condescending." The woman is portrayed as being less than a person, a two-dimensional image. This characterization includes the "dumb blond," the sex object and the whimpering victim. Can include an aggressive, sexual role. Here women are used as sexual objects, in exclusively decorative roles, or presented in roles where others do her thinking.

<sup>8</sup> "How Many Teenagers Still Want Their MTV?" *Business Week*, Aug. 4 1986, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony DeCurtis, "MTV Tries to Counter Ratings Slump," *Rolling Stone* Aug. 14, 1986, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Susan Pingree, Robert Parker Hawkins, Matilda Butler and William Paisley, "A Scale for Sexism," *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1976, pp. 193-200.

<sup>11</sup> Vincent, *op. cit.*

LEVEL II: "Keep Her Place." Some strengths, skills and capacities of women are acknowledged, but tradition also dictates "womanly" roles. She may be presented outside domestic or decorative situations (i.e., where she participates to some degree in a recreational or intellectual environment), but she always is submissive to men. The emphasis is on subservience in romantic or secondary relations. A high emphasis on sexual attributes still is found here.

LEVEL III: "Contradictory." Emphasizes a dual role where a woman plays a traditional, subservient role while also displaying a certain degree of independence. This character's independence is gained at the expense of her subservience. Anything she does outside of domesticity and nurturance is viewed as "something extra" (women may have secondary interests but the domesticity/nurturance dimension is of foremost importance). Examples: A woman with certain skills is placed in a situation where she must teach a man something but then eases up before she embarrasses him. A woman fantasizes that she can act assertively/aggressively to men but in actuality finds that she cannot.

LEVEL IV: "Fully Equal." Treated as a person (possibly a professional) with no mention of her private life. Does not remind us that domesticity and nurturance are non-negotiable the woman's work as well. Women are viewed nonstereotypically.

When multiple levels were detected, only the highest level was used. Besides the measurement of sexism, additional scales were employed to evaluate male-female physical contact, seductive clothing, the occurrence of violence<sup>12</sup> and the sex of the

musicians.<sup>13</sup> No attempt was made to code videos by particular artist.

A total of seven coders was used representing both sexes and a variety of ages. More than 80% of the videos were examined by at least two coders. Inter-coder reliability, calculated as Scott's *pi* on an average of all combinations of comparisons, was found to be .91 for sexism, .97 for physical contact, .90 for seductive attire and .94 for violence.<sup>14</sup>

### Findings

1) As reported in our earlier study, for Summer 1985 videos with women, 54.6% of the observations were rated Level I, 17.3% were Level II, 15.5% were Level IV, and 12.7% were Level III. By Winter 1986-87 we uncovered some fairly major shifts in sexism: 41.8% were rated Level I, 38.5% were Level IV, 11.5% were Level II, and 8.2% were Level III. The difference between the two test years was significant ( $X^2 = 15.64$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ).

2) When sexism is broken down by sex of the musician (videos with no female performers vs. those with women) we find that there was a significant difference between 1985 and 1986-87 ( $X^2 = 20.88$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ). No significant difference ( $X^2 = 6.64$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .08$ ) emerged when Summer 1985 data were isolated, although all-male videos differed significantly from chance ( $X^2 = 49.43$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ), while those with female performers did not ( $X^2 = 6.91$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .08$ ). A significant difference was found, however, when the Winter 1986-1987 data were analyzed separately ( $X^2 = 14.57$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .005$ ). The overwhelming proportion of videos still involved all-male performers and portrayed females condescendingly, but there was a trend for both all-male videos and those with women to increase their overall share of Level IV ratings. These findings were essentially reiterated in a linear response function analysis using "sexism" as the model.<sup>15</sup> We found significant main effects for "performer" ( $X^2 = 18.75$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ) and "year" ( $X^2 = 14.36$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .005$ ) but not the interaction ( $X^2 = 2.55$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .47$ ).

3) As for dress, implicit/explicit nudity was found 10.0% of the time in 1985; and

<sup>12</sup> "(T)he overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon, against self or others) or other compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing." From: George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan and Nancy Signorilli, "The 'Mainstreaming' of America: Violence Profile No. 11," *Journal of Communication*, Spring 1980, pp. 10-29.

<sup>13</sup> There was reason to believe that male exclusivity might be one variable which would produce significant differences in this study. Therefore we coded videos according to the performing musicians' sex (exclusively male vs. some or all female). It was assumed that male musicians working along with women would be more conscientious of the role of women in society.

<sup>14</sup> O.R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> *SAS User's Guide: Statistics, Version 5 Edition* (Cary, North Carolina: SAS Institute, Inc., 1985), pp. 216-219. The program provides an analysis of individual parameters in the linear model. A Chi-square, based on the Wald test, is computed for each effect.

outerwear with nonsignificant changes across the years. Small, nonsignificant, increases were noted for nudity and lingerie/lingerie adaptations, while no change was apparent for the other categories of seductive attire. We did find significant differences between the general category of alluring dress and sexism for both time periods, however. The lack of significant differences between such clothing and sex of the musician, on the other hand, indicates that female artists are just as likely to dress women in videos seductively. Artists like Madonna and Tina Turner (typically rated Level I) are the most obvious examples of such trends.

Although we did not find significant differences for intimate touch, we should note that it almost always occurs in videos rated for Level I sexism. Videos like Don Johnson's "Heartache Alley," Madonna's "Open Your Heart," General Public's "Come Again," and Michael McDonald's "Our Love," all give considerable screen time to sexually suggestive or implicit shots.

Turning to the data on violence we found a slight increase in overall violence, in violence toward women, and in violence toward men, although all increases were nonsignificant. With more than one third of the videos containing violence we must conclude that it occurs quite frequently (although typically at subtle levels). The shifts in significance from violence toward

women to violence toward men also demonstrates a possible increase in concern toward the exploitation of women in rock videos.

### Conclusions

While differences exist by performer's sex, sexism still abounds, and the depiction of these gender roles in rock videos continues to be fairly traditional. In a period when the rock music industry was being criticized for its orientation to sex, drugs and violence, we find that females were still portrayed as submissive, passive and physically attractive. In fact, we found small increases in the use of lingerie and lingerie adaptations, nudity and violence. This may demonstrate a generally passive attitude toward these criticisms within the rock video industry. Even if the trend is unrelated, it raises concern about the socializing effect such life portrayals have on audiences. These videos can too easily provide young people with questionable behavior models. We might wonder about the potential effect such programming has on audience attitudes and behavior. While the presence of female performers may have some relation to sexism in music videos, other traditionally sexist trends seemingly continue. Clio's consciousness may have risen a little in recent rock videos, but there is still ample room for further growth.

### Violence on TV Increases

In 1988 TV viewers witnessed a further increase in violence on television despite the unanimous vote of the U.S. Senate asking the TV and cable industry to improve its record.

Horror and satanic horror series have been added to both network and off network programming. Many adults may not recognize Jason and Freddy as the sadistic murdering heroes of "Friday the 13th" and "Nightmare on Elm Street," but junior high and high school children probably do.

Abrasive talk shows, called "Trash TV," have added to the violence. "The Morton Downey Jr. Show" has repeatedly had fights break out on the set. After CORE's Roy Innis got into a fight on the Downey show, Geraldo Rivera, a former boxer, brought Innis to his show, and a fight ensued.

Meanwhile, "Miami Vice" and "Equalizer" continue to roll along with an average of more than 50 violent acts an hour.

By Patrick R. Parsons

## Values of Communication Students And Professional Self-Selection

*Students reflect expected professional values, with differences according to sequence.*

► Typically attached to the various communications professions are beliefs about the social values—the ethics and attitudes—of their members. Advertising and public relations practitioners are often characterized as less altruistic<sup>1</sup> or even less honest<sup>2</sup>

than journalists. These perceptions have been shown to be held by the public at large,<sup>3</sup> members of the professions themselves,<sup>4</sup> and students preparing to go into these occupations.<sup>5</sup>

This latter group is of special interest to communications educators and media scholars. The question of the relationship between the values and cultural attitudes of communications students and the congruence of these values with the perceived values of the different professions has been the subject of a number of studies.<sup>6</sup> Such research is important for it sheds light on the motivations and social orientations of students—information useful to educators—and it provides a better understanding of professional self-selection, an important element of professional socialization.

In an attempt to better understand why students choose particular communications careers and how their social and political values might effect their choice, we conducted this study of the fundamental cultural values and political attitudes of communications students at the beginning of their professional education. The goals were to compare the differing attitudes of students in advertising, print and broadcast journalism, telecommunications and public relations and to begin building "value profiles" of the different majors.

### Review of the Literature

Motives and attitudes of print journalism students have been studied for at least 30 years.<sup>7</sup> Literature on advertising and

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: Oguz Nayman, Blaine K. McKee and Dan Littmore, "PR Personnel and Print Journalists: A Comparison of Professionalism," *Journalism Quarterly*, 54:492-97 (1977); Ronald Rotenberg, Pierre Poirier and Jean Tremblay, "A Decade After 'The Permissible Lie': Have Things in the Ad Business Really Changed?" *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 12:170-75 (1978).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: *The Gallup Poll*, Aug. 15, 1985, pp. 191-93 (Survey #255-G); Jules Henry, *Culture Against Man* (New York: Random House, 1963); Dennis Jeffers, "Performance Expectations as a Measure of Relative Status of News and PR People," *Journalism Quarterly*, 54:299-306 (1977).

<sup>3</sup> *Gallup*, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: Vincent Norris, "Toward A Social Control in the Advertising Agency," *Journal of Advertising*, 12:32-33 (1983); Lillian Lodge Kopenhagen, "Aligning Values of Practitioners and Journalists," *Public Relations Review*, Summer 1985, pp. 34-42.

<sup>5</sup> Stuart Surlin, "Image Perceptions Vary Between Male, Female Ad Students," *Journalism Educator*, July 1977, pp. 14-15; Carolyn Cline, "The Image of Public Relations in Mass Comm Texts," *Public Relations Review*, 8:70-71 (1982); Jeffers, *op. cit.*; Kopenhagen *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: Ernest Larkin, "A Q-Analysis of Values and Attitudes Toward Advertising," *Journalism Quarterly*, 48:68-72 (1971); Thomas A. Bowers, "Student Attitudes Toward Journalism As a Major and a Career," *Journalism Quarterly*, 51:265-270 (1974); Hugh M. Culbertson, "Study of Student Beliefs Suggests Sequences Do Make a Difference," *Public Relations Quarterly*, 31:24-27 (1986); Stuart H. Schwartz, "Tomorrow's Journalists: Control by Purposive Selection," *Journalism Quarterly*, 53:538-540 (1976).

<sup>7</sup> Clifford Weigle, "Influence of High School Journalism on Choice of Career," *Journalism Quarterly*, 34:39-45 (1957); James Fosdick and Bradley Greenberg, "Journalism as a Career Choice," *Journalism Quarterly*, 38:380-82 (1961); Penn Kimball and Samuel Lubell, "High School Students' Attitudes Toward Journalism as a Career II," *Journalism Quarterly*, 37:413-22 (1960).

► The author is a faculty member in the School of Communications at Penn State.



By Richard C. Vincent, Dennis K. Davis and Lilly Ann Boruszkowski

## Sexism on MTV: The Portrayal Of Women in Rock Videos

*Depiction of gender roles is fairly traditional and sexism is high.*

► It has become commonplace to analyze various forms of television content to determine how each form uniquely distorts everyday life. Perhaps best known of these studies is the work by Greenberg and associates which examines the presentation of racial minorities, the elderly, sex-roles, social behavior and family role structures and interactions.<sup>1</sup>

Generally such research demonstrates that fairly traditional and stereotypical representations of life persist on television. We find such presentations in the characters and social situations of television programming and advertising. Some researchers believe that our perceptions of reality may become warped when such trends persist.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of the current analysis is to examine one area of life portrayal — sex roles — as it is found in a new form of television content designed for viewing primarily by adolescents. We will go beyond earlier studies on Music Television by examining the social context in

which sex roles are presented and the function of performer sex in the portrayal of women.

The present analysis centers on the routine presentation of women in rock videos. What forms of social action are depicted as routine, normal, or expected of women and which actions are either ignored or negatively portrayed? How is female action contextualized? In this regard we will assess whether women are presented as passive individuals who are as objects to attract male attention or as physical contact between men and women portrayed? How are women dressed? How often are women shown as victims of male aggression? Answers to these questions will permit us to reach conclusions about gender role communication by music television.

From an industry viewpoint, rock videos have the distinction of being the first real contribution to entertainment programming on television.<sup>3</sup> Yet one response has not been overwhelming:

<sup>1</sup> For examples of recent work see: Bradley S. Greenberg, *Life on Television: Content Analyses of U.S. TV News* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1980); Bradley S. Greenberg, "Television and Role Socialization: An Overview," in *Journal of Mental Health, Television and Behavior: Implications of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Future* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), pp. 179-190; Bradley S. Greenberg and David G. Gerbner, "Quality and Quantity of Sex in the Soap," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 29:309-321 (Summer 1985); Bradley S. Greenberg, David Graef, Carlos F. Collado, Felipe Korzeny and Charles K. Adkins, "Intimacy on Commercial TV During Prime Time," *Journal of Broadcasting*, 57:211-215 (Summer 1980).

<sup>2</sup> This is a central conclusion of cultivation theory. See George Gerbner and Larry P. Gross, "Living with Violence: The Violence Profile," *Journal of Communication*, 27:173-199 (1976), pp. 173-199.

<sup>3</sup> Bernice Kanner, "Can't Stop the Music Channel," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 11, 1982, p. 18.

Corliss quips that these videos "blitz your eyes and sounds to blitz your ears." Gher is concerned that the "same imagery used to sell a man a car is employed to sell a teenager a car." And Kaplan argues that MTV "is another few steps towards sexualization in a video culture."<sup>6</sup>

Despite the controversy surrounding the video, relatively little systematic research has been done. A few studies have centered on viewer motivations and preferences for rock videos, while others have analyzed the video content.<sup>7</sup> The latter have been generally limited to the simple presence or absence of violence. Related to the present study we find: Sherman and Dominick, "The degree to which video sex content differs in various presentation formats (cable only, cable and broadcast, and video only broadcast) and on certain demographic attributes. They observed that the male orientation of videos is generally high but offered no statistical

evidence to support a relationship between performer's sex and female portrayals.<sup>8</sup> Baxter, *et. al* analyzed levels of sex in music videos and reported a fairly low level, although "sexual feelings or impulses" were coded frequently (56.6%).<sup>9</sup> Brown and Campbell compared race and gender portrayals on MTV and the Black Entertainment Television cable channel's "Video Soul" program. They found marked differences in how whites and blacks were portrayed in antisocial, prosocial and sexual behavior.<sup>10</sup> And Caplan looked only at violence levels and concluded that males are more violent than females and females are not victims of significantly more violent acts than males.<sup>11</sup> Although sexism is sometimes discussed in these studies, none offered a scientific measurement of this dimension.

### Method

The study was limited to music videos aired on MTV. A random cluster sample was drawn from MTV weekday programming, drawn from blocks representing daytime and late night hours. These periods were chosen so that we might avoid periods during which video concerts often are scheduled. The late night daypart also was deemed important because the industry considers it its prime time.<sup>12</sup> As it turned out, videos from the late evening and early morning dominated our sample.

Videos were recorded in the Summer of 1985. Almost 30 hours of programming was recorded. The sample included 300 videos. Videos were eliminated if they were live performance types without a story line, when there were subsequent appearances in the sample, or when they lacked a female character. One hundred ten music videos remained for analysis, a number comparable to the size of many a week's MTV playlist.

Our study began with a scale of sexism first described by Butler-Paisley and Paisley-Butler and refined by Pingree, *et. al.*, originally designed to test for sexism in print advertisements.<sup>13</sup> Although meant to analyze the "slice of life" vignettes of print advertising, adoption of the scale

Corliss, "The Medium is the Maxim," *Film Comment*, 13:34 (July/August 1983).

Gher, "The MTV Aesthetic," *Film Comment*, 13:34 (July/August 1983).

Kaplan, "MTV: 21st Century Box," *Esquire*, March, 1985, p. 122.

Greenberg and James Lull, "The Adolescent Audience and Why They Watch," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1986, pp. 115-125; Rebecca B. Rubin, Elizabeth M. Perse, Cameron Armstrong, and Noreen Faix, "Media Use and Meaning in the Home," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 29:335-359 (Summer 1985); and Norbert Mundorf, "Image Effects in the Presentation of Video Rock," *Communication Research*, 14:326-334 (1987).

Sherman and Joseph R. Dominick, "Violence in Music Videos: TV and Rock 'n' Roll," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1986, pp. 79-93.

Baxter, Cynthia De Riemer, Ann Landini, and Michael W. Singletary, "A Content Analysis of Music Videos," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 29:335-340 (Summer 1985).

Brown and Kenneth Campbell, "Race and Gender in Music: The Same Beat but a Different Drummer," *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1986, pp. 94-106.

Caplan, "Violent Program Content in Music Television," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 29:144-147 (Winter 1985).

Research, "MTV — Its Impact on Radio and Television: A National Study of MTV Viewership," Report, MTV, Summer 1983.

Butler-Paisley and William J. Paisley-Butler, "The Media: Frameworks for Research," A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Journalism, San Diego, Calif., August 1974; and Robert Parker Hawkins, Matilda Butler and William J. Paisley, "A Scale for Sexism," *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1976, pp. 193-200.

► Richard C. Vincent is assistant professor of communication at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Dennis K. Davis is professor of speech communication and Lilly Ann Boruszkowski is assistant professor of cinema and photography, both from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1986 annual meeting of the International Communication Association in Chicago. The authors wish to gratefully acknowledge the help of Paul Heinberg of the University of Hawaii.

rendered a useful measurement for examining the diverse sex role portrayals found in rock videos. Pretests helped us refine the scale. We found it necessary to reduce the scale and modify the Pingree definitions. The result is a four-item ordinal consciousness scale that measures how women are portrayed, limited to specific roles and relationships. Because of the range of story lines found in rock videos, such a scale, by necessity, must address both sexuality and occupational roles.

**LEVEL I: "Condescending."** The woman is portrayed as being less than a person, a two-dimensional image. Includes the dumb blond, the sex object and the whimpering victim. This level of portrayal can include an aggressive, sexual role. Examples: Here women are used as sexual objects, or are presented in roles where others do her thinking.

**LEVEL II: "Keep Her Place."** Some strengths, skills and capacities of women are acknowledged, but tradition also dictates "womanly" roles. The tradition also dictates emphasis on subservience in romantic or secondary relations. A high emphasis on sexual attributes still is found here.

**LEVEL III: "Contradictory."** Emphasizes a dual role where a woman plays a traditional, subservient role while also displaying a certain degree of independence. This character's independence is gained at the expense of her subservience. Anything she does outside of domesticity and nurturance is viewed as "something extra" (woman have secondary interests but the domesticity/nurturance dimension is of foremost importance). Example: A woman with certain skills is placed in a situation where she teaches a man something but then backs off before she embarrasses him.

**LEVEL IV: "Fully Equal."** Treated as a person (possibly a professional) with no mention of her private life. Does not remind us that domesticity and nurturance are non-negotiable the woman's work as well. Women are viewed nonstereotypically.

When multiple levels are detected (more than one level of sexism encountered) all were recorded. Besides the measurement of sexism, additional scales were

employed to evaluate the degree of female physical contact (casual hugging, kissing, dancing, petting, love making), the type of seductive clothing — if (bathing suit, undergarments, seductive attire, suggested nudity), the occurrence of violence, the type of narrative situation shown (romance, recreational, domestic educational, social institutional, political occupational), and the sex of the musicians.<sup>14</sup>

Four coders — two female, two male — were used, although not all viewed every video. More than 75% of the videos were examined by either two or three coders. Inter-coder reliability, computed as simple agreement, was found to be 95.8%.<sup>15</sup>

### Findings

The data shows that of those videos with women, 56.9% of the observed were rated Level I: "Put Her Down" on the sexism scale. The next highest level found was Level II: "Keep Her in Place" (17.1%), followed by Level IV: "Fully Equal" (13.8%), and Level III: "Contradictory Role or Two Places" (12.2%). More than 14% had more than one level of sexism represented. Typically Level I supplemented a Level I rating with Level II, 4.2% Level III, and 2.5% Level IV. Most (76.4%) used male performers exclusively while 23.6% were all female. When examining how sexism relates to the sex of the musician, we found that there is no significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 6.64$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .084$ ). Although the overall chi-square is nonsignificant, it seems to be due largely to the heterogeneous nature of our data. Analysis of separate distributions into the four levels of sexism revealed that the all-male videos differ significantly from chance

<sup>14</sup> There was reason to believe that male exclusivity was one variable which would produce significant results in this study. Therefore we coded videos according to performing musicians' sex (exclusively male vs. mixed sex vs. female). It was assumed that male musicians would be more conscientious of the role they played in society.

<sup>15</sup> O. R. Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social and Humanities* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1968), 141.

TABLE I

Frequencies of Video Sexism by Sex of Performers

Sex of Performer(s)	Sex of Performer(s)		
	All Male	All Female and Mixed	Total
I: Condescending	52	8	60
II: Keep Her Place	14	5	19
III: Contradictory	11	3	14
IV: Fully Equal	10	7	17
Total	87	23	110

$\chi^2 = 6.64$ , d.f. = 3,  $p = .084$

all male = 49.43, d.f. = 3,  $p < .001$

female and mixed = 6.91, d.f. = 3,  $p = .08$

$\chi^2 = 3.3$ , d.f. = 3,  $p < .001$ ) while those with all-male performers does not ( $\chi^2 = 6.91$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .08$ ). Thus far as can be seen, the overwhelming proportion of videos coded as having sexism were all-male performers and portrayed females condescendingly.

The most predominant form of male-female contact was simple touching found in 18.5% of the videos. 26.9% showed touching, 18.5% displayed contact while touching, 25.2% depicting hugging, 4.2% heavy petting, and 1.7% had love-making. As for dress, 9.2% of the videos suggested nudity, 38.7% used seductive clothing, and 10.1% used undergarments. The 12 of the videos coded as having seductive clothing presented some or all of their performers in bathing suits. For illustrative purposes, intimate contact and alluring attire as they compare with levels of sexism are presented in Table 2. When the form of alluring attire was present, there were significant differences when compared with level of sexism ( $\chi^2 = 19.06$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ). Seductive clothing was present in terms of dress/undress, but undergarments, bathing suits and even suggested nudity occurred frequently. Significant results between alluring attire and sex of musician ( $\chi^2 = .37$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .545$ ) suggests that such dress is often worn by female performers are present as when they are not.

For male-female contact, casual touching, kissing, hugging and dancing

were found most often. When comparing all videos which had at least one occurrence of kissing, hugging, petting or implied love-making, the new variable, "intimate touch," produces nonsignificant differences between sexism ( $\chi^2 = 5.78$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .123$ ) and sex of musician ( $\chi^2 = .03$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .859$ ).

Of the videos analyzed, 33.6% used violence. Most acts of violence were of "men to men" (20.2%), "men to object" were next most often (10.9%), and this was followed by "men to women" (8.4%). Those showing "woman to man" violence totaled 6.7%. Women were almost never portrayed as being violent toward objects (1.7%). Most violence was found in videos coded for Level I sexism (17.6%). The next highest were Level II videos with 8.4% being violent. Violence to women, performed by either a male or female aggressor was significant by musician's sex ( $\chi^2 = 6.89$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .01$ ), but violence to men by either sex was not ( $\chi^2 = .13$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .725$ ).

Finally the videos were evaluated for the presence of various narrative situations. 33.6% were found to depict romance, 66.4% dealt with recreational topics, 11.8% involved domestic situations, 2.5% were on education, 33.6% showed social institutions (often depicting anti-establishment themes), 8.4% handled political topics, and 18.5% displayed occupational settings. These were grouped into two categories which were intended

TABLE 2

Alluring Dress and Intimate Touch, by Level of Sexism

Level of Sexism	Alluring Attire		Intimate Touch	
	Present	Absent	Present	Absent
Level I: Condescending	37	23	24	26
Level II: Keep Her Place	12	7	9	11
Level III: Contradictory	3	11	5	4
Level IV: Fully Equal	2	15	2	8
sum:	54 (49%)	65 (51%)	40 (36%)	70 (55%)

 $\chi^2 = 19.06$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$  $\chi^2 = 5.78$ , 3 d.f.,  $p = .123$ 

to reflect traditional media sex role presentations—domestic, romance and recreational became the new variable: "traditional female narrative;" education, social institution and political situation were recoded: "traditional male narrative." Only 12.3% of the video presentations had neither narrative present, while 10.1% had only the traditional male narrative, 60.9% had only the traditional female narrative, and 21.8% used both. The overall chi-square was significant ( $\chi^2 = 18.98$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .001$ ). In addition, "traditional female narrative" displayed significant differences for sexism ( $\chi^2 = 8.23$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .05$ ) but not performer's sex ( $\chi^2 = .41$ , 1 d.f.,  $p = .524$ ). "Traditional male narrative" was found to have significant differences for both sexism ( $\chi^2 = 10.36$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .01$ ) and performer ( $\chi^2 = 4.15$ , 1 d.f.,  $p < .05$ ).

### Discussion

Our results support the notion that sexism is fairly high in music videos. With 57% of the videos rated Level I, and all but 26% judged to portray women in one of the top two sexist categories, the pattern seems quite clear. The presence of differences between sexism and both traditional male and traditional female narratives also support the notion that earlier media stereotypes still are very much at work today in this recent form of video programming, with traditional female narrative found most often. When either narrative is present the level of

sexism increases. Although there were significant differences in sexism portrayal in videos by male musicians and by female or mixed male-female musicians, we did determine that the distinction of male-only videos was occurring by chance and overwhelming portrayed women condescendingly in the absence of significant differences between sexism and performer overall appearance be due to homogeneity in the sample. Consequently we can conclude that there is no marked difference in the way men and females present sex-role stereotypes of women in rock videos.

In the videos examined it was common for women to be used exclusively as decorative objects. In these productions women are often portrayed as background decoration, clad in bathing suits, underclothing or highly seductive clothing. They are shown in sexually suggestive poses. In one video the male performer is shown slipping money in a barmaid's cleavage while she responds with a seductive look of gratitude; in the other video another woman is shown dancing as she plays a game of strip poker. In the video "Lovin' Every Minute of It" when the portrayal is less sexually suggestive, there is a tendency for women to fall into simple ornamental roles. The disparity is important for it suggests that sexist videos need not be sexy.

Sexism is perpetuated quite effectively through the way the women of rock videos are dressed. There were significant

TABLE 3

Traditional Male and Female Narratives, by Level of Sexism

Level of Sexism	Female Narrative		Male Narrative	
	Present	Absent	Present	Absent
Level I: Condescending	53	7	14	46
Level II: Keep Her Place	16	3	10	9
Level III: Contradictory	12	2	5	9
Level IV: Fully Equal	14	7	10	7
sum:	91 (83%)	19 (17%)	39 (35%)	71 (65%)

 $\chi^2 = 8.23$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .05$  $\chi^2 = 10.36$ , 3 d.f.,  $p < .01$ 

differences between alluring dress and narrative. There was no significant difference between such dress and performer's sex, however. Why? Well, video dress is so different from that found in magazine advertisements. Videos essentially are selling records and life styles, so characters don't fashionably contemporary clothing. This clothing often just happens to be fairly seductive too.

Turning to the data on violence we find that while there is a fairly high level (34%) of violence, it is not very blatant. Outright sexual violence and holocaustic death and destruction just does not occur in most videos. Only 10% of our videos portrayed violence directed toward women, yet there was enough to demonstrate the trends across levels of sexism when present.

To underline the nature of sexism in music videos it may be helpful to examine one case where the video was rated Level I, "Contradictory." AC/DC's "Sink the Pink" shows a woman who is extremely beautiful and dazzles the all-male crowd at the game of pool. She enters the pool hall and dazzles the all-male crowd and proceeds to totally dominate in a pool game with one of the men. Before she however, the woman suddenly backs out and begins to come on sexually to her opponent. The message appears to be that a woman with confidence and a commanding presence, but she still is not as permissible for her to use her sexuality as long as she does not outshine the man.

The high level of sexism is emphasized by the few videos we studied where men and women were treated equally. These often use "verite" footage depicting people in natural environments (John Cougar Mellencamp's "Lonely 'Ol Night," and Jeff Beck and Rod Stewart's "People Get Ready"). Each draws a strong line between real life and what we see in the video. People are overweight. They wear thrift shop clothing. In the Beck/Stewart video the duo is dancing with rural women of Latin descent. The women are not cosmopolitan. They wear peasant dresses. This approach is a major exception for the video portrayal of women.

Perhaps the most staggering implication of our study is found in the way rock videos glorify luxury and material wealth. Life is painted as jovial, containing few responsibilities. There are few occupational references in videos yet no one ever addresses the problem of how one gets the money necessary for the luxurious life being portrayed. This is an area where videos differ markedly from lifestyle portrayals in other media. Videos show life as fun, exciting and free from domestic situations. They often are shot in exotic locations. The Las Vegas images of Starship's "We Built this City" are good examples. Yet all of these luxuries cost money for which most people must work. Relationships with women also usually do not come without commitments. In rock

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839. PENSINGER, GLEN. *Election results in 3-D*. TV Bdcst. p30+ July—CBS's '86 election graphics sought to educate viewers.

840. ROSENBERG, SHAWN W. and PATRICK McCafferty. *The image and the vote: manipulating voters' preferences*. POQ 51:1 pp31-47 Spring—Manipulation possible through unfavorable, favorable photographs.

841. VARIOUS AUTHORS. *Special issue on photojournalism ethics*. JMME 2:2 pp7-108 Spring/Summer—TV, newspapers, magazines, posters, examined.

### Women and Media

842K. ANON. *CRTC makes adherence to industry guidelines on sex stereotyping a requirement for broadcast license*. Media Report to Women 15:3/4 pp8-9 May—Aug.—Because self-regulation has been ineffective, Canada's CRTC will require broadcast stations to follow guidelines on sex stereotyping in programming. (Also see *Media Report to Women* pp9-11 15:3/4.)

843. ANON. *Miss Mary Winslow: a camera heroine of 1895*. J. of the West 26:2 pp27-9 April—Reprint of a San Francisco Examiner 1895 article describing early woman "traveling photographer."

844. BLAIR, GWENDA and CHARLES C. MANN. *Media savvy*. Ms. p40+ July/Aug.—The women's movement overall no longer is "good copy," but many feminist concerns can be presented in ways that will result in more media attention.

845. BUSH, ALAN J. and JOHN J. BURNETT. *Assessing the homogeneity of single females in respect to advertising media and technology*. J. of Ad. 16:3 pp31-8—Divorced, never-married women and widows use mass media very differently and have different attitudes toward advertising.

846. CANTROW, ELLEN. *Don't throw that old diaphragm away!* Mother Jones pp22-6+ June/July—Nicole Hollander, creator of "Sylvia" comic strip, is one of only three syndicated women cartoonists.

847. CORAM, ROBERT. *New life at the Monitor Quill* pp18-23 April—Katherine Fanning, the first woman president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, is trying to turn the *Christian Science Monitor* around. (Also see *ASNE Bulletin* pp40 April.)

848. DOUGHAN, DAVID T. *Periodicals by, for, and about women in Britain*. Women's Studies International Forum 10:3 pp261-73—British commercial women's magazines, women's organizational publications and feminist periodicals published during the last 200 years are described.

849. FROST, RICHARD and JOHN STAUFFER. *The effects of social class, gender and personality on physiological responses to filmed violence*. JOC 37:2 pp29-45 Spring—Males and females were equally strongly aroused by violent films, but inner city residents more strongly aroused than college students.

850. MALAMUTH, NEIL M. and JOHN BASTAR. *Sexual violence and the media: indirect effects on aggression against women*. J. of Social Issues 42:3 pp75-92—A model illustrates how sexual violence in the media may indirectly lead to violence against women because of the interaction of cultural factors and individual variables.

851. POLLOCK, JOHN C. and MICHAEL WINKLEMAN. *Salary survey*. PRJ pp15-17 June—Median salary for male public relations practitioners responding to survey was 65 percent higher than that for females, but much of the disparity reflects age, experience differences.

852. PRENDERGAST, ALAN. *Best in the west*. WJR pp21-5 July/Aug.—Mary Hargrove, special projects editor for the *Tulsa Tribune*, is one of the country's best—and most underrated—investigative reporters.

853. RICH, CAROLE. *A close-up look at women journalists*. E&P p56+ Sept. 5—Job stress study shows women more subject to stress problems than men.

854. SCHOONMAKER, MARY ELLEN. *TV news and the face-lift factor*. CJR pp48-50 March/April—Four years after the Christine O'Connell trial, local women TV anchors are under slightly less pressure to look like beauty queens.

855. STEEVES, H. LESLIE. *Feminist theories and media studies*. CSMC 4:2 pp95-135 June—Advocates socialist feminism, disciplinary flexibility.

856. STEIN, M.L. *Promotion priorities questioned*. E&P pp14-15 Aug. 15—By women editors and staffers at Los Angeles Times.

857. STEIN, M.L. *Sexism in the newsroom*. E&P p9+ July 4—Women journalists say sexism and discrimination still flourish.

858. STEIN, M.L. *Who was first?* E&P pp12-13 June 27—The Los Angeles Times labeled Chusimir, recently appointed executive editor of the Miami Herald, as the first woman

to "be in charge of the newsroom of a major metropolitan newspaper," ignoring Mary Anne Dolan, rival Los Angeles Herald Examiner editor from 1981 to 1985.

### PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN (Continued from page 755)

tics, however, such unrealistic portrayals are common.

### Conclusions

One of the most commonly portrayed aspects of passage in music videos involves development of a heterosexual relationship. Central to the understanding of such relationships is gender role performance. The depiction of these gender roles in rock videos appears to be fairly traditional. Males are portrayed as submissive, sensitive, yet sensual and physically attractive. Sexism is high when we break down videos into traditional male and traditional female narratives. When musicians are all male they also are more likely to use narrative roles commonly assigned to men in media portrayals. While the clothing worn in videos is frequently quite innovative, it nevertheless

tends to reinforce traditional gender roles. Relationships are almost always shown as developing in recreational settings — at concerts, carnivals, or dances. Relationships typically are shown developing between couples with little interference or involvement with friends or family. And, when relationships are presented, males are portrayed as more aggressive and more in control of the relationship.

It is revealing to find that rock videos perpetuate social norms so effectively. Although perhaps not that surprising, it is worth noting that such characterizations are products of an industry which sometimes prides itself on its progressive attitudes. Apparently rock video portrayals are not very different than other media presentations of heterosexual relationships.

### SCA Publishes Index to Communication Journals

The Speech Communication Association announces the publication of a new edition of the *Index to Journals in Communication Studies*. Comprehensive in its coverage, the 645-page *Index* includes the following 15 journals, from inception through 1985:

*Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 1915-1985; *Communication Monographs*, 1934-1985; *Communication Education*, 1952-1985; *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 1984-1985; *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 1935-1985; *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 1937-1985; *Central States Speech Journal*, 1949-1985; *Communication Quarterly*, 1953-1985; *Assoc. for Communication Administration Bulletin*, 1972-1985; *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 1968-1985; *Journal of Communication*, 1951-1985; *Human Communication Research*, 1974-1985; *Journalism Quarterly*, 1924-1985; *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 1956-1985; *Journal of the American Forensic Assoc.*, 1964-1985.

Copies of this publication can be obtained from the SCA National Office.



many of those viewers routinely turn to entertainment programming widely available on cable and independent channels.

The variability in ratings during the Reagan Administration suggests that viewers are highly selective in their behavior. Anchoring the audience for presidential broadcasts is a core of active, information-seeking viewers that can expand according to the perceived interest in a speech. Shop-worn speeches exhorting voters to support unpopular policies drew record low audiences, while speeches involving a crisis or scandal attracted millions more.

The increased menu of attractive entertainment programming on cable, independent television, and videocassette offers a more plausible explanation for the ratings decline of presidential television than viewer attitudes toward President Reagan or politics in general. It also could be that the address-to-the-nation format, virtually unchanged from the early days of radio, has become outdated and no longer captivates audience attention. Further research is needed to ascertain viewer response to presidential communication. Such research could demonstrate a uses and gratifications explanation of the value viewers perceive from watching or not watching presidential television.

Presidential broadcasts are one of many forms of televised politics that has enjoyed large audiences during the past 2 decades. If viewers are actively avoiding presidential broadcasts, it is likely that they will also avoid other forms of political television, the consequences of which could be quite critical to the future of political broadcasting.

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## Image of Women in Television Advertising

Carol L. Ferrante, Andrew M. Haynes,  
and Sarah M. Kingsley

*Our purpose was to determine whether the manner in which women are portrayed in television advertisements has undergone significant change during the past 15 years. Replicating the 1972 study by Dominick and Rauch, a content analysis was performed on 1,480 commercials. Commercials were coded for product advertised, gender of the voice-over announcer, gender of the on-camera product representative, setting, age, and occupation of the characters. Women were found to be portrayed in a wider range of occupations and appeared more frequently in settings outside the home than in 1972. Product type, voice-over announcer, on-camera product representative, and age categories remained unchanged.*

The portrayal of women in television advertisements has been extensively researched and criticized by many who believe that women depicted roles in commercials have not kept pace with women's changing roles in society. Recently, however, advertisers have come to realize the importance of women in the marketplace, particularly working women, and have altered their techniques in an effort to appeal better to women (Quindlen, 1978).

Substantial demographic changes have altered the marketplace. For instance, in 1985 54.5% of all women over the age of 16 were in the labor force, as compared to only 43.0% in 1971 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1987). This is indicative of the factors advertisers must consider if they hope to reach the entire spectrum of the consuming public.

Previous research about the portrayal of women in television commercials has concentrated primarily on the following elements in advertising

**Carol L. Ferrante** (B.A., Widener University, 1986) is an investment operations administrator at Goldman Financial Group, Philadelphia. Her research interests are human resource management and increasing productivity through employee satisfaction. **Andrew M. Haynes** (B.A., Widener University, 1986) is a law student at New York Law School. His research interest is the use of law in social conflicts. **Sarah M. Kingsley** (B.A., Widener University, 1986) is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Delaware. Her research interests include teen suicide. This manuscript was accepted for publication January 1988.

ments: (a) the relationship between the type of product advertised and the presence or absence of women, (b) the gender of the off-camera voice-over announcer, (c) the gender of the on-camera product spokesperson, (d) the settings of male and female characters, (e) occupational differences between male and female characters, and (f) the perceived ages of male and female characters. The present study replicated the 1972 study by Dominick and Rauch, which is considered to be a foundation for this type of research.

Researchers have found women to be overrepresented in ads for such items as personal hygiene products and female cosmetics, but underrepresented in ads for cars and related products (Culley & Bennett, 1976; Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Mamay & Simpson, 1981; Scheibe, 1979). These studies found that men dominate the role of off-camera product spokesperson or voice-over announcer (Culley & Bennett, 1976; Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Knill, Pesch, Pursey, Gilpin, & Perloff, 1981; Mamay & Simpson, 1981). Although Dominick and Rauch found the majority of on-camera product spokespersons to be male, subsequent researchers found men and women to be equally represented as on-camera product spokespersons (Knill et al., 1981; Schneider & Schneider, 1979).

Women traditionally have been overrepresented in the home and underrepresented outdoors and in business settings. However, researchers since Dominick and Rauch (1972) have found fewer differences in the settings of male and female characters, with women being shown less frequently in traditionally female settings (Culley & Bennett, 1976; Merlo & Smith, 1987; Schneider & Schneider, 1979).

Investigators have found significant differences in the occupations of male and female characters. Women have been predominantly portrayed as homemakers and mothers, and men in occupations outside the home. Additionally, men have been portrayed in a broader range of occupations than women (Culley & Bennett, 1976; Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Knill et al., 1981; Schneider & Schneider, 1979).

Advertising in general has emphasized youth. Researchers have found the majority of female characters to be in the 20 to 35 year age group, while male characters have been evenly distributed between the 20 to 35 year and 35 to 50 year age groups (Culley & Bennett, 1976; Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Schneider & Schneider, 1979).

As noted above, the proportion of women in the labor force has increased steadily since 1972. Furthermore, the literature suggests that advertisers have taken this and other demographic changes into account in fashioning their commercials to appeal to an ever changing audience. We, therefore, hypothesized that: (a) women will frequently be shown in advertisements for products that were once only represented by men; (b) women will be used as on-camera product spokespersons more frequently than in 1972; and (c) differences in the settings and occupations of male and

female characters will have decreased, and women will be portrayed in a wider range of occupations than in 1972. We did not, however, anticipate significant changes in the gender of off-camera product spokespersons or the perceived ages of male and female characters.

## Method

This content analysis of primetime television commercials replicated the 1972 Dominick and Rauch work. The methodology used by Dominick and Rauch was followed as precisely as possible to maintain consistency and prevent the introduction of extraneous variables. We examined the use of women in commercials in relation to each of the following characteristics: (a) the type of product advertised, (b) on-camera product spokesperson and off-camera product representatives (voice-over announcer), (c) commercial setting, (d) apparent occupation, and (e) perceived age.

We sampled primetime television commercials over a 3-week period from October 6, 1986 to October 24, 1986. During the first week, we examined all commercials from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday on each of the major commercial broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, NBC).<sup>1</sup> During the second week, we examined all commercials from 9:00 to 11:00 p.m. Monday through Friday on each of the three networks. During the third week, we examined the portrayal of men. This male sample consisted of commercials in 54 randomly selected half-hour time periods between 7:00 and 11:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The commercials examined during this third week were coded for the presence of male characters only; the commercials examined during the first and second weeks were coded for the presence of female characters only.

Only those characters appearing on the screen for at least 3 seconds and having at least one line of dialogue were included in our sample. The type of product advertised and the gender of the voice-over announcer were recorded for all commercials, whether or not the commercials contained a codable character. Children appearing in commercials, network promotional announcements, and commercials for entertainment events (e.g., sporting events and movies) were not coded. During the first two weeks of our study we coded a total of 932 commercials for female characters. During the third week we coded a total of 548 commercials for male characters.

A pretest for intercoder reliability was conducted in which each coder coded the same sample of 100 commercials. The total reliability was found to be 95.8%, ranging from 91% in the age category to 100% in the setting category.<sup>2</sup> We employed the Chi-Square test for significance to analyze the data comparing male and female characters and comparing our results with those of Dominick and Rauch (1972).

## Results and Discussion

Tables 1 and 2 summarize our results and the results to those of Dominick and Rauch (1972). The category of product type (i.e., whether or not women appeared in commercials for certain types of products) is omitted from these tables because it yielded no significant results. The "other" categories ranged from 67% in 1972 to 74% in 1986. The "other" category is comprised of advertisements for a variety of products which, individually, did not comprise a significant proportion (5% or more) of the advertise-

**Table 1**  
Gender of Voice-Over Announcer, On-Camera Representative,  
and Occupation, 1972 and 1986

	1972	1986
Voice-Over	<i>N</i> = 946	<i>N</i> = 763
Male	87%	83.1%*
Female	6%	8.1%
Chorus	7%	8.8%
On-Camera Product Representative	<i>n</i> = 523	<i>n</i> = 326
Male	60%	57.4%
Female	40%	42.6%
Occupation of Females	<i>n</i> = 230	<i>n</i> = 329
Wife/Mother	56%	53.5%
Flight Attendant	8%	0.3%***
Model	7%	7.0%
Celebrity	5%	6.7%
Cook/Maid/Servant	3%	2.4%
Secretary/Clerical	3%	2.1%
Businessperson	2%	3.0%
Others	16%	25.2%
Occupation of Males	<i>n</i> = 155	<i>n</i> = 316
Husband/Father	14%	23.4%*
Athlete	12%	0.9%***
Celebrity	8%	5.4%
Construction Worker	7%	3.5%
Salesperson	6%	4.1%
Businessperson	6%	15.8%**
Pilot	6%	0.6%***
Others	41%	46.2%

Note. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

**Table 2**  
Setting and Age of Male and Female Characters, 1972 and 1986

	Female		Male	
	1972	1986	1972	1986
Setting	<i>n</i> = 462	<i>n</i> = 609	<i>n</i> = 235	<i>n</i> = 489
Home	38%	30.2%*	14%	14.7%
Outdoors	19%	21.2%	44%	26.2%**
Business	7%	13.1%*	14%	24.5%*
Limbo	10%	15.6%*	12%	10.2%
Combination	7%	4.4%	2%	3.1%
Others	20%	15.4%	14%	21.3%
Age	<i>n</i> = 462	<i>n</i> = 609	<i>n</i> = 235	<i>n</i> = 489
Young (20-35)	71%	69.8%	44%	40.5%
Middle (36-50)	23%	25.0%	42%	46.0%
Old (50+)	6%	5.3%	14%	13.5%

Note. \**p* < .01. \*\**p* < .001.

ments containing codable women. Thus, the comparative value of "other" category is minimal, and is not reported. Therefore, we found evidence to support the hypothesis that women will frequently be shown in advertisements for products that were once only represented by men.

The makeup of the off-camera product representative (i.e., voice-over announcer category) has changed only slightly (see Table 1). Although the percentage of male voice-overs dropped 3.9%, the change was spread evenly between women and chorus, resulting in no significant change in the category. Our null hypothesis that this category would not undergo significant change was supported. This is consistent with previous research (Dominick & Rauch, 1972; Mamay & Simpson, 1981) and may be explained by a belief that the male voice is more authoritative than the female voice and hence a better seller.

Our hypothesis that women would be used as on-camera product spokespersons at a greater frequency than in 1972 was not supported. We found no significant changes in the gender of on-camera product spokespersons (see Table 1). Several previous studies found little or no difference in the frequency with which men and women appear as on-camera product spokespersons (Knill et al., 1981; Schneider & Schneider, 1979), thus making it difficult to identify any trend or pattern emerging.

The settings of male and female characters have undergone substantial changes since 1972, supporting our hypothesis that differences in the settings of male and female characters would decrease. Women were shown less frequently in the home and more frequently in business and "limbo"



settings (i.e., settings with no discernable location or time frame; the actors are often shown simply against a plain background without props). Men were shown less frequently outdoors and more frequently in business settings. These results support those of Merlo and Smith (1987) who found that, although advertisers no longer overwhelmingly associate women with stereotypical locations and roles, they avoid associating women with traditionally male locations and roles. This may account for the increase in the use of women in "limbo" settings.

The portrayed occupations of male and female characters have undergone substantial change since 1972. Although women are most often portrayed in the role of wife/mother, men are increasingly being portrayed in the role of husband/father. Men also are more frequently portrayed in business occupations. The total number of occupations observed for men increased slightly from 43 to 55. Although women's portrayed occupations have changed little within the various categories observed by Dominick and Rauch (1972), the total number of portrayed occupations has increased dramatically from 18 in 1972 to 47 in 1986. Our hypothesis that women would be portrayed in a wider range of occupations than in 1972 was supported. However, our hypothesis that the differences between the portrayed occupations of male and female characters would decrease was not supported.

The ages of male and female characters have not changed significantly since 1972. This supports our null hypothesis that this category would undergo little change. This may be due to U.S. society's emphasis on youth, and a belief that age is a negative attribute.

These results reinforce the fact women and men are not treated equally in television advertising. Although the results show that some changes have been made, women are still predominantly portrayed in the home while men are more frequently shown in the business world. Perhaps more than anything, these results point out that, although advertisers aim to reach all segments of the consuming public, their portrayal of society is not necessarily an accurate reflection of how society is composed.

In sum, it appears that advertisers have begun to acknowledge the changing roles of women in society, but have yet to implement these changes fully into their advertising strategies. Because the shift in the portrayal of women in advertising is a gradual one, it is likely the changes observed here will continue into the future.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> At the time of the 1972 Dominick and Rauch study, television programming from 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. was nationwide, network broadcasting. The 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. slot is now filled with local programming, rather than more uniform network broadcasts. This difference may have had a slight affect on the comparative results of our study. Two key factors, however, lead us to

believe the differences, if any, were small. First, commercials during this half-hour genre contained no codable characters so they were not used for purpose of comparison. Second, advertisements that did contain codable characters were generally repeated during the 8:00 to 11:00 p.m. programming period. Thus, the commercials during the half hour of local programming were not substantially different from ads on the network broadcasting.

<sup>2</sup> We did no further reliability testing throughout the remainder of the data collection. Thus, it is possible subtle changes in our perceptions could have occurred after the reliability test.

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